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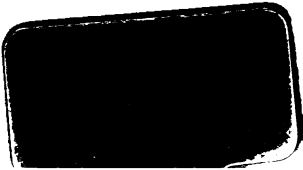
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# Agnes de Tracy;

## A TALE OF THE TIMES

OF

S. Thomas of Canterbury.

BY THE

REV. J. M. NEALE, B.A.

LATE SCHOLAR OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE;

AUTHOR OF "HERBERT TRESHAM."

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Ye goen to Canterbury: God you spede;  
The Blissful Martyr quité you your mede!  
*Prol. Cant. Tales.*

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Cambridge:

THOMAS STEVENSON.

LONDON: J. G. F. AND J. RIVINGTON.

MDCCCXLIII.





TO THE REVEREND  
WILLIAM HODGE MILL, D.D.

CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,  
AND CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE;  
•  
LATE FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,  
AND PRINCIPAL OF BISHOP'S COLLEGE, CALCUTTA;

*This Tale*

IS AFFECTIONATELY AND RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED







## P R E F A C E.

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ONE of the unhappy effects which were naturally, though not necessarily, produced by the Reformation of the English Church, is the gulf which seems to be fixed between those who are now her sons, and the Saints and Martyrs of her earlier times. Even those whose names still appear in our Calendar produce, except as a testimony of the wishes of those who constructed the Prayer-Book, little practical effect; and we look on the days sacred to the memories of S. Augustine, and S. Elphege, and S. Dunstan, and S. Edmund, without venerating the Founders, and the Martyrs, and Confessors of Her who has been made, by God's good Providence, our nursing mother.

If such be our apathy towards those whom she commemorates, there is little need for wonder that one, whose name has, from unhappy circumstances,

been struck out of her Records, should not only be considered as unworthy of remembrance, but, in this Erastian age, become the subject of hatred and scorn. The very name of S. Thomas of Canterbury has become associated, even from our childhood, with all that was intolerant, and superstitious, and bigoted: our infidel and schismatical historians fostered the impression; and those who ought to have removed it have, in too many cases, feared to incur the odium of defending one against whom popular opinion was so decidedly expressed. Indeed, the silence with which he is treated by most of our standard Divines is a curious subject of remark.

The Becket papers in the remains of Mr. Froude were a noble and successful attempt to vindicate for the Saint the honour due to a Martyr; and if the following pages are at all serviceable in conducing towards the same end, my task will have been well undertaken. I have endeavoured in them to relate things as they really were; not claiming for the Prelate the glory of a perfect character, nor hiding what may be justly considered the abuses of the age in which he lived. Neither have I thought it necessary to remark on these in the course of the tale; since I am not writing for Romanists, but for

Anglicans ; and the latter will probably be quick-sighted enough on these points.

A curious and instructive comparison ought to be drawn between S. Thomas of Canterbury and Archbishop Laud. The former, in opposing Erastianism and a Monarch, courted perhaps too much the favour of the people ; the latter, in opposing the frenzy of the rabble, leant perhaps too much on the favour of a King. But who would seek for the faults, when he may contemplate the glorious actions of these two blessed Martyrs ?

It is sometimes said, that granting S. Thomas to have been all that we assert he was, it can only be dangerous to exhibit him so, since thereby we seem enticing people to Romanism. But, not to mention that truth need never fear truth, the case is not so. Whatever Romanists may assert as to their retaining the same principles which S. Thomas held, one thing is certain, that they can in no sense be called members of the same Church. That Church, for which he contended during all his Episcopate and at last shed his blood, either exists in us, or not at all. And so it may be said of all our early Martyrs and Confessors. We are joined with them, on all essential points, in doctrine ; to succession from

them, we alone have any claim. The more affectionate reverence we bear them, the more unwilling surely shall we be to leave their Church.

In the mean time we shall best follow their example by striving and praying for that Unity of the Church which they enjoyed. And while we think, in reference to our present dissensions, of Archbishop Laud's words, uttered as on this day, "Now it is in a storm itself, and God only knows whether or how it shall get out; and which is worse than a storm from without, it is become like an oak cleft to shivers with wedges made out of its own body;" we shall also remember how dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of His Saints; and how powerful is the protection of the blood of Martyrs. Surely, if lately the Church in Man was preserved by the remembrance of one Prelate, the Church in England, with her thousand Confessors, will not be permitted finally to fall.

PENZANCE, 1843.

**BOOK I.**

**S. Thomas a Confessor.**

BEATI PATRIS MERITA JAM IN TUTO POSITA SECURI  
MAGNIFICEMUS; QUI GUBERNACULUM FIDEI VIRILITER  
TENENS, ANCHORA SPEI TRANQUILLA JAM IN STATIONE  
COMPOSUIT: QUI CONTRA OMNES ADVERSARIOS SCUTUM  
TIMORIS DEI TAMDIU INFATIGABILITER TENUIT, DONEC  
AD VICTORIAM PERVENIRET. QUID ENIM FUIT TOTUS  
VITA ILLIUS CURSUS NISI UNUS CUM VIGILI HOSTE CON-  
FLICTUS?—S. MAXIMUS, *Hom. LIX. de S. Eusebio.*

# AGNES DE TRACY.

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## CHAPTER I.

It was the Feast of S. Margaret, 1164; and never did a July morning break more brightly over the ancient city of Canterbury. The heavy, yet majestic towers of S. Martin's—the first Christian church in England—and the massy Cathedral, glowed in the slant ray of the rising sun; the grey and quaint old houses, with tall sharp roofs, round-headed slits for windows, and here and there richly carved Norman doors,—the bridge, the castle, the gloomy wall, with embrasure and barbican, caught in their turn the earliest light: but stately above all rose the glorious Abbey of S. Augustine. The huge circuit of its enclosure walls was distinctly visible through the clear and transparent air: the curiously sculptured gate, its refectory, its cross church, its burial ground and tall cross, were



all bathed in the same purple hue. There it stood ; in the world, but not of the world ; enshrining in its holy earth the ashes of the earliest Archbishops ; of its sainted founder, Augustine, Apostle of England ; of wise Mellitus and Adeodatus ; as well as of the first Christian king and his renowned successors.

The second Nocturn was over in the Abbey-church : the glorious triumph of the Virgin Martyr had been celebrated : and just as the sun-rays fell on the east end of the Choir, Te Deum burst forth from the assembled fraternity. The grey night-mist melted away from the vaulted roof and the slim shafts of the cloister gallery ; the stained glass put on its crimson and golden glory ; the saintly forms wrought therein came out into bolder relief : knights seemed to grasp their swords more knightfully ; Bishops to wield their pastoral staff more bishopfully : and flakes of pure gold and crimson fell on the frescoed arches and flowery capitals of the Choir Piers. As the radiance of the chandeliers or *crowns of light* became dimmer, and the sweet influences of morning were felt in the gloomy pile, many a humble soul rejoiced to think that the Sun of Righteousness had arisen with healing in His wings ; and joined truly and earnestly in the Divine Hymn of S. Ambrose,—THOU art the King of Glory, O CHRIST : THOU art the everlasting Son of the Father. Louder and louder did the music swell, more and more triumphant waxed the notes

of the choir, as they chanted with one voice and soul, Day by day we magnify Thee: and we worship Thy Name, ever world without end. The bells in S. Ethelbert's tower gave forth a merry peal, as Te Deum concluded, and Lauds, the Matin sacrifice of praise, began. While the brotherhood are calling on all things, living and inanimate, spiritual and corporeal, to laud their Maker,—let us give a glance at those who fill the Choir.

In his throne on its south side, a meek old man, in richly worked velvet cope, ~~scarlet~~ as, signifying the Martyr's resisting unto blood, but spangled with pure gold, to symbolize her crown, and inwrought with fleurs-de-lys of pearls, fit emblems of her virgin purity, sat Odo, Lord Abbat of the Monastery of SS. Peter and Paul the Apostles, and S. Augustine, the first Archbishop. His pastoral staff was fixed by the side of the throne, the crook being turned inwards, to shew that his jurisdiction was not like that of a Bishop, over those without, but only reached to those of his own. A few grey looks escaped on either side of his golden mitre, with its rich inlay of jewels: and there sat on his features a composure and serenity well becoming his high station; mixed, it may be, with a shade of timidity, such as befitted rather the Abbat than the Bishop. Before him lay a mighty volume, of gemmed exterior and illuminated vellum pages, scored in the simple musical notation of the times. On the south side, at the entrance of the Choir, sat Eadwald, the

Saxon Prior; a man of some forty years of age, with the blue eye and fair complexion that strongly spoke of his race: and if the general cast of his countenance wore the melancholy natural to that then oppressed nation, his eye seemed occasionally to brighten at the recollection that the first Saxon Archbishop since the Conquest then ruled the Church of England. Opposite to him, and on the other side of the Choir door, was Warel the Sub-prior: and in their richly carved stalls, whose balls and wreaths of flowers shewed the rapid introduction of the new style of church architecture, sat the sixty monks of the Foundation. The Altar, with golden candlesticks, monstrance, and reliquary; the stone roodscreen, with its seven lamps; the great brazen eagle, in the centre of the Choir; the lingering scent of sweet incense; the rich robes, the gorgeous hangings, the frescoed roof, the glowing tiles, the sublime Altar ascent, the solemn Gregorian chant; let the mind conceive all these at once, and it will have some faint idea of the scene as it then was.

Lauds are over: Abbat Odo has given the blessing, and, preceded by the silver cross and pastoral staff, passes from the Choir, and followed by the brotherhood, walks solemnly down the long Nave to its western door. Anxiously waiting for his exit stood brother Edred the porter.

"My lord," he said, "here is one of Sir Ranulph de Broc's villeins newly arrived, who beareth tidings

that his lord is very grievous sick, and despaired of by the leech. And he beseecheth you for God's love, and the amity that hath been so long between you, that you lose no time, but visit him at Saltwood, where he lieth ill; for he hath that to say which concerneth not only his bodily and ghostly health, but toucheth also on the welfare of this house."

"God shield," said the Abbat, "that a sick man should call for aid, and a churchman refuse to render it. Let the brethren know that we shall not partake of our morning meal with them: and let brother Roland say morrow mass in S. Alphege's chapel for the health of the good knight Ranulph de Broc. Cause them to make ready my palfrey; and pray brother Warel to ride with us this morning to Saltwood: and let the Infirmarer also come, bringing with him such drugs as from the villein's tale he thinketh likely to be of avail. Strange virtues have our country plants, when blessed by the prayers of Holy Church; and the leech is oftentimes of avail when, as the Psalmist saith, *Omnem escam abominata est anima eorum, et ad portas mortis appropinquaverunt.*"

"I will do your bidding, my lord," replied the porter: and the Abbat retired to doff his priestly robes, and to prepare for his journey.

In somewhat less than an hour, mounted on his ambling palfrey, the Sub-prior riding by his side, and the Infirmarer at a short distance behind, Abbat

Odo rode out of the great gate : and bestowing a *Dominus vobiscum* on one or two serfs wending to their daily toil, struck southward, as the road led him, through the garden of England. There, where the beautiful hop now hangs in clusters of gold, all was corn or pasture land ; for hops were not used in England till more than three centuries after. Winding through pleasant vallies, and ascending sunny hills, the holy men travelled on ; as free a conversation passing between them, as might consist with the comparative youth and modesty of the one, and the dignity and age of the other.

" Strange, strange times be they we live in, brother Warel," said the Abbat, " strange and evil seasons, full of hurt for the Church, and of danger and terror for ourselves. What a fearful schism is this which distracteth the holy Roman Church ! We can scarce think it to be one, so divided against itself is it now. For what saith holy writ ?—*Omnis domus, quæ in se divisa est, cadit* : every house divided against itself, is brought to nought. The emperor followeth Victor : the French king and our own monarch cleave unto Alexander : the one excommunicateth the other : bans, bulls, and interdicts are employed ; yea, and when spiritual arms fail, they turn unto carnal weapons of warfare, forgetting that CHRIST hath said, *Regnum Meum non est hujus mundi*—my kingdom is not of this world. Then again the feud between the Archbishop and the King promiseth no good ; God order it for the best."

"Yet of a surety, holy Father," replied the Sub-prior, "much good may thence arise to the Church. All the powers of this world, the pomp and majesty of kings, the corruption of courts, the bribery of wealth, the influence of power, have set themselves in array against the spotless Bride of CHRIST: and lo! she derideth them all; she fainteth not under the oppressor; she is not allured by the seducer; no weapon that is formed against her shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth up in judgment against her shall she condemn."

"Ah, my son," returned Odo, "thou art young, and seest these things with a young man's eyes: thou lookest forward to the crown, but overlookest the cross; thou regardest the triumph, but forgettest the conflict. I, perchance, from my long experience, lack some of that hurtful eagerness which besetteth untried dispositions; and lacking that, it may be I also lack some of that courage which well beseemeth all ages. I cannot, indeed, fear that the principalities and powers of this world can prevail against us: for what saith Holy Writ? *Portæ inferni non prævalebunt in eam*: but I dread lest the Church should suffer diminution of her glory, or infraction of her privileges; and I dread lest he, whom, like another Moses, God hath raised up to be her deliverer from secular bondage, our good Archbishop, should, by any step of human frailty, or any too subtle machination of the Enemy, be led to that excess of zeal which he may after repent with bitter tears."

"Now our Lady forefend !" exclaimed the other, "hath he not borne himself right bishopfully hitherto? hath he not put to shame his accusers by his own innocence, and terrified his enemies with the arms of holy Church?"

"All this he hath done, my son, and more," answered the Abbat; "he is of all ecclesiastical virtue a very pattern: given to hospitality; tender to CHRIST's poor; to the hungry a Martha, to his Master a Mary; he spendeth his nights in prayer, and his days in holy deeds; and such an one as I am not worthy to loose his sandals from his feet. But he is of a fiery temper, which, if men say true, he inheriteth from his eastern ancestry: and who knoweth whither much spurring and goading may force him? Even like a noble destrier, which smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting; but being over-urged with the rowel, turneth against his own rider, and his own friends."

"Thou didst know the Archbishop, holy Father, before he was called to his high eminence. Wrought it so great a change in him as men say?"

"Both at Oxford and Bononia, my son, did I know him; and there were ever in him traces of the same noble disposition. Much, indeed, seemed he to have lost of his ancient rigour, when he was Archdeacon of Canterbury and Provost of Beverley; and marvellously did he adapt himself to all the changes and fickleness of our good King's court. And when

he was made Chancellor, he seemed for a season to put off the austerity and manners of a clerk, that he might win to himself the love of the King: and how he did accomplish his design, all England hath heard. And I verily think—God forgive me if I therein err—that he sometimes was in danger of being himself sucked up into that whirlpool of vain delights, even then when he sought to withdraw the King therefrom. But now, being by God's special grace consecrated Metropolitan of All England, he putteth away all secular things, he girdeth himself with sackcloth, he mortifieth the flesh, he feedeth the hungry with his own bread, he ransometh captives from the Sarazins with his own jewels, in all things approving himself a worthy successor of Augustine of blessed memory. *Sancte Augustine, ora pro nobis !*" he concluded, crossing himself.

"I have heard," observed Warel, "that it was ill-taken of the King that he should resign his office of Lord High Chancellor, without first acquainting him therewith. But how can one man serve two masters? how could he, being encumbered with worldly cares and dignities, have fed his sheep as his famous predecessor, Archbishop Theobald—whose soul God assoilzie!—did, when free from the like carnal occupations? And touching his not acquainting the King therewith first, he therein—saving your Fatherliness's judgment—did shew his rare prudence; for otherwise he had hardly, and with much greater offence, laid down that his dig-



nity at all. Of a surety, it was ill done of his master to deprive him in anger of that poor archdeaconry which he so greatly valued, that he besought almost with tears that he might retain it."

"I doubt not," pursued the other, "that our Lord Pope Alexander, in the council holden at Tours, three years ago, did, greatly stir him up to become the champion of the Church. Since then, he hath spared neither time nor labour; the wicked he hath made his enemies, and the good his friends; and forasmuch as the wicked be many, but the good few, many enemies hath he, and few friends."

"And right gloriously," said the Sub-prior, "did he stand forth in the council of Westminster for the rights of the clergy. True it is—woe is me therefore!—that grievous crimes have late been committed by clerks, and that they have been too lightly visited: but nevertheless CHRIST's ambassadors are not to be in an earthly court judicable. And a fearful infraction of the rights of the Church that seemeth to me which the King designed to perform when he demanded of our Archbishop and of others the Bishops, that a clerk degraded for crime should be delivered to the King's officers, that he might be punished for the same according unto the laws of the land. And God be praised that England had then such a Primate, for ready enough were the other Bishops to agrace the King touching that matter."

"We were ourselves in Westminster," said Abbat

Odo, "at that season, having occasion to confer with our Right Reverend Brother of S. Peter's, touching certain points of discipline. And fearful it was to see the choler of the proud Earls and Knights there assembled, when the Bishops made answer, saying that they could not agree to the demand made of them."

"Yet they say, holy Father, that since that time he hath somewhat yielded to the prayers of the court, insomuch that at Oxford he did promise obedience to the laws without adjoining thereto his former *Salvo ordine*. Now if this be so, whereto serveth all his former boldness? What profit hath his constancy? Where may the Church betake herself, when of her stoutest defenders she is deserted, and by her boldest champions she is betrayed?"

"Men's reports, my son, vary respecting the promise which the Archbishop hath given. What it was, the time must shew, and that before many months be past. For, as I hear, the King hath summoned a great council to meet at Clarendon, on the Feast of S. Hilary next ensuing, to treat of Church matters and the state of clerks. The Archbishop will of course be there, and by his pattern will the Clergy frame themselves. But think not, if he should desert his charge, that God could raise up none other champions, even as Mardocheus said unto Esther, *Si etiam nunc silueris, per aliam occasionem liberabuntur Judæi*—if thou shouldest altogether

hold thy peace, then shall deliverance arise elsehow unto the people."

"Nevertheless," replied Warel, "I cannot but confidently hope that he, and none other, will save the Church in this extremity. When I have seen him as he did celebrate the holy Mysteries at the High Altar of his cathedral, his face was as that of one of those Knights who sleep in the Choir of our Abbey-church, of whose souls JESU have mercy; even so holy and composed and stern in its sadness, as one that living in this world, had while on earth his conversation in heaven. Yet of marvellous affable demeanour is he to the poor, and of them much loved; and if he knoweth how to rebuke with severity, he knoweth also how to bind up with gentleness; in all things approving himself a meet shepherd for CHRIST'S Flock; terrifying the lions with the sword, and directing the lambs with the crook."

"God," answered the Abbat, "order all for the best. Now we are drawing nigh to the fair castle of Saltwood; and note ye, my son, how little can worldly wealth profit in the hour of tribulation. Many a fair hide of land hath Sir Ranulph de Broc, and many a fair herd of beeves thereon; and now all these things shall remove themselves, as saith Holy Writ, like a post that maketh no delay. But what he hath laid up in heaven,—and not little is that, my son—by alms-deeds and good works, by ransoming captives from accursed Paynim, by

gifts to holy Church, and by fighting for the holy Sepulchre, these things abide by him and profit him now ; and are as a sure treasure, which neither moth corrupteth, nor thief consumeth."

As he spoke, the party were ascending the hill on which the castle stands ; and passing through the grey old barbican and the great gate, in which the toothed portcullis showed its formidable jaws above, were met by the porter, who, with a low obeisance, assisted the Abbat from his palfrey, and marshalled the visitors across the court.

## CHAPTER II.

CONDUCTED by the seneschal up the long flight of steps leading into the entrance-hall, and guided through several narrow vaulted passages, the Ecclesiastics met, at the door of the chamber the knight occupied, the Priest who held the family chantry, and was then in attendance on his patron.

"Right glad," he said, with a low obeisance, "will the knight be to see you here, lord Abbat: he hath been much troubled by evil spirits; but by our Lady's grace the fit hath passed off, and he hath his sound senses. He hath confessed and received his Viaticum; for I fear me he hath not much longer to stay: and since that he hath ever and anon asked if your Fatherliness were arrived, to whom he hath matters of great moment to disclose."

"Lead on, my son," returned the Abbat. And passing through the low door, with its wreath of

chevrons, they entered the room where the Knight lay. It was floored, walled, and vaulted with stone : rushes were strewed over the pavement, and in a chimney place or cavern, the arch whereof was richly decked with Norman mouldings, and rested on slender shafts with cushion capitals, were a pair of fire-dogs, which, though the weather was sultry, bore recent traces of having been used. On a low couch, at the further end, lay the good Knight : some of his servants were standing round him ; and a shaggy deer-hound, with its long hairy face pitifully upturned towards its master, crouched by the bed-side. The Knight's face was very pale, except for one purple spot on each cheek, which flushed out over the whole as the Abbat drew near.

"God reward you, my lord," said the dying Knight, "for obeying my summons so speedily. I looked not for you till midday, and it lacketh, as they tell me, three long hours of that. I thought not to have lasted out till then."

"*Benedicite*, my son," replied the Abbat. "To God the LORD belong the issues from death : and we have brought with us an holy man, well skilled in the leech's art, if perchance he may benefit you."

"He shall be welcome to try, holy Father," replied the other, "so he delay me not long ; and I thank you heartily for the kindness : but as for me, my earthly course is well nigh run. However, Sir Monk, I thank thee for being willing to exercise thy craft on me ; and free leave hast thou."

The Infirmer came forward; put a few questions to the sufferer himself and his attendants, as to the symptoms of the first attack, and subsequent exacerbations, of the fever; felt the pulse offered to him; and then desired one of the menials to fetch a cup of Malvoisie.

"But," said the chantry Priest, "the chirurgion hath straightly forbidden that he should taste wine, lest it hurt him."

"It will not hurt him, Father, *now*," said the Infirmer sadly. "Sir Knight," he continued, "if thou hast that which weigheth on thy mind in temporal matters, thou wilt do well to unburden thyself of it with all convenient dispatch; for, since I would speak plainly, I do not think that thou wilt live to see midday."

"God's will be done," replied the Knight. "This I looked for." They brought him the wine, and he drank it. "Now," he added, "my lord, I would have all men out save this holy man," pointing to the chantry Priest. When the others had retired, the Abbat said, "Sir Ranulph de Broc, since it seemeth to be God's good pleasure to take you to Himself, and that very shortly, meet is it that we lose no time in coming to the point wherefore you summoned us. You have already, as we hear, confessed, and received that absolution which holy Church bestoweth on her penitent children; and we doubt not that this holy man hath given you ghostly counsel befitting this extremity. Nevertheless it is

our duty to exhort you, that you forget not the poor and holy Church : the which we need the less to press upon you, in that we know you are forward of yourself to remember all these things."

"Ten hides have I left of pasture land," returned Sir Ranulph, "to the Abbey of S. Augustine, in token of my zeal for holy Church, and of my singular love for yourself. Lands also I have left sufficient to found a bead house for twelve men and a chaplain ; also twelve marks for ever to found a chantry for the health of my soul in the church which my father, whose soul God pardon, did build in this place."

"Good works be they, my son, and acceptable to God : not as being sufficient in themselves to purchase salvation, for that were heresy of all good Christian men to be abhorred : but, forasmuch as they spring out of love to Him, and are done in obedience to Him, and minister to His Church, and support the poor, who are His, they be both good and profitable. Nevertheless thou must with all thine heart cleave unto CHRIST our LORD alone, trusting in Him, and worshipping Him evermore ; that so, by His bitter Passion, and by the intercession of All Saints, thou mayest at last be admitted to His heavenly kingdom ; as doubt not that thou shalt be, if thou departest in the true Catholic faith. And now let us know the matter which thou wouldest impart."

"It was chiefly," replied the Knight, "touching



the Lady Agnes de Tracy that I did ask for your presence. You shall incontinently see her; but now, as they tell me, she is worn out with her watchings, and sleepeth; and more tenderly could she not have watched and tended me, an she had been mine own daughter. Her father, Maurice de Tracy, who, as your Lordship knoweth, fell by my side in Holy Land, did, as he lay a-dying, after he had devoutly confessed his sins, leave this his daughter, whose mother died at her birth, to my care and guardianship; and since I did return into England, she hath abidden with me, and was of my wife, now with God, right well tended, and did love her as a mother, and made great moan for her. She, as thou also knowest, is contracted to my son Ranulph, and that with her own good consent; for broad lands though she hath, God shield I should oppress the orphan. Yet I thought it not convenient that my son should as yet enter into that state; for he is young, and I would desire him to win his spurs as gallantly as his father did. He is now in Normandy with our gracious King; and convenient it will not be that the Lady Agnes should tarry here, when I am departed, in the castle which will be his. I would therefore desire thee, of our old loves, and for the memory of him who died in the service of the Holy Cross, to see that she be well bestowed in some religious house at Canterbury: where she may well tarry some year or two yet, until my son shall have done good deeds of chevisaunce; and thou mayest be able to watch

over her, and to assist her with ghostly and temporal counsel."

"Rest assured, my son, that I will faithfully discharge the trust reposed in me. And so God be gracious unto me, as I am careful of the Lady Agnes's welfare.—Further, I will see thy son as soon as may be fitly done, after his return hither, and will tell him of this thy will. And now, Sir Knight, doth any other temporal matter press on thy mind?"

"Nothing," said Sir Ranulph de Broc. "Do thou, Father, call in my meynie, and bid them summon my foster-daughter. I would fain, had God so ordered it, have died knightfully in my stirrups, doing battle against the Sarazins,—but His will be done."

The Priest accordingly summoned the household; and first of all, Agnes de Tracy entered; and passing across the room, knelt by the dying man and burst into a flood of tears. "Agnes," said the Knight in a tremulous voice, for death was fast coming on, "I have given you over to the care of this holy Abbat, mine own and your father's ancient friend; and he knoweth all that concerneth your future life, and hath promised to guard you and to bestow you safely. Come, my child, you may not thus lament the will of God: rather thank Him that He hath raised you up so sure a friend."

Agnes rose, and turned to the Abbat. She was attired in the simplest dress of the time: the man-

tilla, fastened over the shoulders by two brooches, and the tasselled strings of silk falling in front, the tight sleeves, and unembroidered petticoat, that we see in the fair sepulchral effigies of grey old churches. Her Norman race might be read in her height, her dark clear eye, and raven hair; and as she turned to the Abbat she shewed a face exceedingly beautiful in its resigned sorrow.

"My Lord," she said, "I thank you in the name of my dear father—so I ever call him—for the kindness this day shown to me, soon, I fear me, to become a double orphan. Would to God that I had rather left him, than that he should be snatched from me!"

"Lady," said the Abbat, "we are glad that we may prove to this good Knight our friendship in his time of need. Learn to look on us as your father; for such, by God's help, will we be unto you."

"Are all here?" asked Sir Ranulph. "You have loved and served me faithfully all my life; and I think none here can say that I have been other than a good lord to him. You will find that none of you are forgotten—I have remembered all: you, my good Adam," addressing the seneschal, who knelt by the side of the Knight, and kissed his extended hand, "and all of you, to the meanest. I know that it grieves you sore to see your poor lord dying; but thanks to these holy men, I am well prepared; God grant each of you as easy a departing. And you will learn to love my son as you have loved me—of a gentle nature he is, and will well repay your love."

Stifled sobs and tears were the only answer to this speech. The dying man proceeded :—"Come nearer to me, Agnes. Methinks the room waxeth dark. It is very cold. I think I am going—I do commend myself, miserable sinner, to the HOLY TRINITY!"

The Abbat, seeing by the ashy hue which crept over the Knight's face, that the soul was departing, made a sign to those present to kneel, and in a clear voice began the Commendation of the spirit in the agony of death ; "To God I commend thee, beloved brother, and to Him Whose creature thou art, I commit thee! that when thou shalt have paid the penalty of thy sins by thy mortality, to Him, Who formed thee from the dust of the earth, thou mayest return. When thy soul hath departed from the body, the glorious company of Angels meet thee! the mighty senate of Apostles come forth to thee! the triumphant army of Martyrs greet thee! the shining cohort of Confessors surround thee! the jubilant chorus of Virgins receive thee! the Face of CHRIST JESUS shine mercifully upon thee! Be thou free from the horror of the shades, and the terror of the flame, and the agony of the torment! Let Satan and his angels yield before thee, let them fly into darkness and eternal night! Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered; let them also that hate Him flee before Him! Like as the smoke vanisheth, so let them vanish away: and like as wax melteth at the fire, so let the ungodly

perish before the presence of GOD ! CHRIST JESUS, That was crucified for thee, save thee ! CHRIST, That suffered His agony for thee, preserve thee now in this agony of death ! CHRIST, That rose for thee on the third day, raise thee up to eternal life !”

There was a solemn silence, disturbed by nothing but the heavy gaspings of the dying Knight, and the sweet song of one little bird, that, unconscious of the scene of grief within, was pouring her lovely notes to the warm sunshine on the quaintly carved gargoyle without. The Abbat, having paused for a moment, proceeded :

“Depart, Christian soul, from this world ; in the name of GOD the FATHER, Who created thee ; in the name of GOD the SON, Who suffered for thee ; in the name of GOD the HOLY GHOST, Who hath sanctified thee ; in the name of Angels and Archangels ; in the name of Thrones and Dominations, in the name of Principalities and Powers ; in the name of Cherubim and Seraphim ; in the name of Patriarchs and Prophets, of Apostles and Evangelists, of Martyrs and Confessors : to-day be thy habitation in peace, and thy dwelling-place in the holy Sion. Through the same CHRIST our LORD. Amen.”

Again he paused ; and then continued, nearly in the words of the Reformed Anglican Church :

“O GOD of pity, GOD of mercy, GOD, That according to the multitude of Thy loving-kindnesses blottest out the sins of them that are penitent, and

puttest away the remembrance of former crimes by the grace of remission, look down favourably on this Thy servant; and give to him that asketh it with all his heart, forgiveness of his offences. Renew in him, most merciful FATHER, whatever hath been corrupted by the frailty of his body, or violated by the fraud of the devil; and join this member to the unity of the Church. Pity, LORD, his groanings; behold his tears; and him that hath no confidence except in Thy loving-kindness, receive by the grace of reconciliation: through CHRIST our LORD.

“Receive him, O LORD, and rescue him, as Enoch and Elias from death; Noe from the flood; Abraham from Ur of the Chaldeans; Lot from Sodom; Daniel from the lions’ den. Amen.”

At the conclusion of this supplication, the good old Knight sighed deeply; and the Sub-prior held the pax to his lips. He had just strength to kiss the image of his Crucified SAVIOUR; and in the act, his spirit departed.

“CHRIST, continued the Abbat, “Who hath called thee to Himself, receive thee!” “And Angels,” was the response, “into the bosom of Abraham bear thee!”—“Eternal rest grant unto him, O LORD!” “In Thy light let him see light!”—“To thee, O LORD,” again the Abbat continued, “we commend the soul of Thy servant; that being dead to the world, it may live to Thee; that its sins may be blotted out by the remission of Thy pardon, and itself presented faultless in Thy sight.”

The sorrowing company arose from their knees and retired. Agnes de Tracy gave one kiss to the cold lips, and tore herself away ; and the lifeless body was left to the proper attendants.

In a south chapel of Saltwood church for many ages might be seen, in a low canopied recess, the effigy of a Knight in chain armour : the jupon was girt around him ; his legs were crossed and rested on a hound ; and his hands were clasped in prayer. And on the rim of the stone, in Lombardic characters, was the legend—

✠ Sire : Ranulph : de : Broc : gist : hici :  
Dieu : de : salme : eyt : mercy : Amen.

## CHAPTER III.

THE Sub-prior Warel was right. Archbishop Becket *had* compromised himself by his promise to the King at Oxford. When the council met at Clarendon, he expressed his unfeigned sorrow for what he had done; and in swearing to obey the laws, insisted on adding his old clause, *Salvo Ordine*. Three days he persisted in this resolution; till, wearied out with the importunities of the nobles, won upon by the remembrance he entertained of the ancient friendship and familiarity he had enjoyed with his royal master, weighed down with the pusillanimity of the Bishops, and without a single friend or encourager at hand,—in evil hour he signed the Constitutions of Clarendon; thereby turning the Church into a creature of the state; making CHRIST's kingdom dependent on an earthly monarch; bringing her down from the lofty position she had enjoyed; and rendering it impossible, in



human likelihood, that she could ever regain it again. Regain it she did, and by the Archbishop's means :—but it cost him his life.

Archbishop Becket had no sooner taken the fatal oath, and seen the clamour of joy with which his compliance was received, and the engrossment of the sixteen Erastian Constitutions, whereby the jurisdiction of spiritual courts was limited, appeals to Rome forbidden, and excommunications restrained from being pronounced, without the consent of the King, than his heart smote him. In deep and bitter penitence he passed the following night ; and he occupied himself with planning the means of extrication from his difficulties. That he would at all events, and at whatever cost, win back again the jewel of the Church's freedom, it cost his undaunted spirit little time to determine. But he felt that he had wilfully left the vantage-ground he held : the constitution might before-time seem to favour his claim ; it was now decidedly opposed to him : plead canons and counsels as he might, he was liable to be met by a countercharge of perjury ; and how could he exhort others to confidence, when himself had given the example of despair ? The first thing to be done was, by severe acts of mortification and discipline, to give public proof of grief for the error of which he had been guilty : he abstained from offering Mass for forty days ; and by confessing his crime in taking the oath, shewed also his determination not to be bound by it ; since an

oath involving sin cannot be binding,—otherwise were Herod justified in the Martyrdom of S. John Baptist. But not satisfied with this, he despatched a secret messenger to the Pope, containing an account of the whole matter, and beseeching absolution for the oath; and he received a bull, not only absolving him from its necessity, but enjoining him to return to the duties of a Prelate. Now, however men may condemn the absolutions of this nature received from Rome, (and, alas! in many instances too justly,) none can deny that Becket was perfectly, by the very nature of things, released from the obligation of the Clarendon oath. Doubtless, the fact of his having taken it lowers the glory of his Martyrdom; but perhaps it enabled him to display a perseverance against difficulties, an indomitable resolution in well doing—a master mind, relying on God, and bending all its vast resources to fulfil His will,—such as the world can hardly furnish an instance to match.

Before we proceed to the commencement of the struggle, we must notice a few circumstances connected with the other characters of our tale.

Agnes de Tracy had scarcely been settled in the Benedictine nunnery of S. Mary at Canterbury, before she received a letter from Ranulph de Broc, filled with the warmest expressions of affection for herself, but setting forth, that in obedience to what he knew to be his deceased father's will, he had taken the Cross, and proposed to sail for the Holy Land; urging her, however, by all the respect she entertained for

his father's memory, by her love for himself, by the remembrance of the happy hours they had spent together, and by the binding character, in the sight both of God and man, of their contract, to remain stedfast to him. Agnes, though she might sorrow at, could not but admire, and love him for, his resolution; and together with a glove, which he should wear in his bassinet, returned him such an answer as made the heart of the young and gallant knight leap for joy.

It chanced that shortly afterwards Archbishop Becket visited Canterbury; and happening to be in need of a private secretary, the Sub-prior Warel was recommended to him by his friend Abbat Odo; and right gladly did the young monk enter on a sphere of action which brought him into daily contact with one whom he already half idolized. And the affection soon became mutual; for Becket, finding in his secretary a disposition congenial to his own, soon made him his confidential friend and adviser.

It will, however, be better to allow our characters to speak for themselves. It was on Tuesday the 23rd of October, 1164, that two persons were sitting together in the principal room of the convent of S. Giles, at Northampton. Before them was a massy oaken table covered with documents of various kinds; and in the chimney corner, supported by silver fire-dogs, carved with the monogram **HC**, some logs were burning brightly. The elder of the two wore alb and stole; the younger was vested as a Benedictine monk. The face of the former was

one of those which haunt the beholder by day and by night, long after they have passed away. It expressed the firmest degree of resolve; the somewhat aquiline nose, chiselled mouth, and piercing grey eye could be interpreted in no other manner. Yet there was a contraction of the lofty forehead, which plainly shewed that strong and varying emotions were at work in the heart; yet, mixed with all the dignity of the countenance, there was kindness and affability, and with all its conflicting feelings, the tokens of a deep inward peace. The countenance of the other expressed an eager and anxious kind of hopefulness, not altogether free from disquietude and impatience.

"We are glad," said the Archbishop, (for he was the elder of the two,) "we are glad, son Warel, that thou art come at last; and thou hast done well that thou art so speedily here. Never, since first God called us to this weighty office which we imperfectly administer, have we been so pressed in spirit, so beset by fightings without, and fears within, so troubled with strong enemies, and ill assisted by weak friends, as these six last days, since our arrival in Northampton."

"And yet," observed Warel, "few have had more experience of those trials which the prince of the power of this world, and the malice of his servants, work on the true sons of holy Church, than hath your Fatherliness, since the day that the pall was first put about your shoulders."

"True, my son," replied the other, "God hath called me, unworthy though I be, to suffer much for His Church, as thou very well knowest. For first of all, when I would have left England, after the council held at Clarendon, the sea suffered us not, but did twice drive us back unto our native land, as obeying the commands of his LORD, Who would not have us to escape the danger, or shrink from the suffering. Then again, the King did summon us before himself, and we refused to appear, as well knowing the snares and dangers which evil men had plotted for us in his court. On this account, as thou also knowest, did he summon this parliament at Northampton, that we might therein be accused of high treason and perjury—crimes which our soul hath ever detested. GOD forbid that we should not prefer His glory and the Church's good before an earthly king's anger; yea, and that we should not rather break through a wicked oath, and that wrung from us by necessity, and for which we have obtained absolution, than add unto its sin—of which we truly and heartily repent us—by keeping it!"

"But what, holy Father," asked Warel, "hath chanced since your Paternity's arrival here? For on my road hither from Canterbury I heard nothing but such idle tales as Fame loveth to disport with."

"We will tell you, my son, as briefly as may be; for it may much concern you to know. Marvellous great concourse was there hither on S. Etheldreda's day, both of Earls and Barons, Bishops and Ab-

bats, and a rascal rout of retainers and followers. Never did I see Parliament more fully thronged ; for all men knew that now must come the decision of the Church's cause ; that it should now be seen whether the sword or the Crosier were to have the preeminence, whether the prayers of departed Saints or the threats of ungodly men should take most effect. Then the King, arrayed in his royal robes—God grant him long to wear them!—stood and made an oration against me. Thou knowest how we were once fast friends ; how our thoughts and speech were in common ; how our business and rest, our days and our nights, were shared together. Judge then, therefore, if we, who have never wronged him even in thought, who for him would give up every thing, save the testimony of a good conscience, who from him would endure any thing, save insult to the Church wheteof we are, under God and His Vicar, the Head,—judge if we did not, like the prophet Jeremy, long for eyes like fountains of tears, that we might weep and be satisfied, that the old friend should become the young enemy, the ancient benefactor the new injurer ! He accused us of contumacy, in that, when summoned, we denied to appear before him. We, as our duty was, defended ourselves therefrom ; pleading with many tears,—for they be the arms of a Bishop,—that we were ready with joy to have come before our monarch, but for two weighty reasons, us then urging : on the one hand, that our diocese, from the late festive and

regulated, could then not without much difficulty spare us ; and on the other, that from what we knew of the machinations of our bitter enemies—whom God forgive !—we doubted our persons would at that season be scarce safe in the court, and did therefore humbly desire to wait till a fitter opportunity of presenting ourselves there might arise. The King made answer with exceeding angry and bitter words, calling us ungrateful to his love, and traitors to his favour ; and did exhort the whole assembly to find us guilty of the matter wherein he accused us.”

“ But surely,” answered the Sub-prior, “ there was too much love, not only for the Church, but for truth and honesty, in that great council, containing in itself the flower of English chivalry and learning, that hath vanquished ere now Paynim and Sarazins, both by lance and by book—yea, too much love, holy Father, for thyself — that they should do as the king bade them.”

“ Alas, my son !” returned Becket, “ knowest thou not that which the wise man saith—*Ira regis leonis rugitus*—the king’s wrath is as the roaring of the lion ? Truly the love of honesty and uprightness profiteth those little who have the fear of man before their eyes. And love to ourselves had few in the council : the laymen hate us because we will not overlook their encroachments and robberies on holy Church ; and the Bishops and Abbats, because with strong arm we curb in their excess of

riot. With one voice did they take counsel against us, finding us, in the matter nominated, guilty of contumacy towards the king; and so brake they off for that day. We, with a sad heart, betook ourselves to our lodgings in this house; and none, save our own vassals, followed us. Nay, in all this town, none are there of the better sort that bear true love to us but thyself, son Warel, and the Prior of this convent;—and little can he understand the mighty struggle which even now is going on for the very being of the Church. He scarce comprehendeth that we fear for her, and not for ourselves; and doth choose such consolations as pedagogues do for practice of rhetoric read unto their scholars. Seeing that on earth there was none who could give us guidance or comfort, we continued instant in prayer to God all that night; and did on the next day, being Friday, understand that our goods and chattels were, for that contumacy whereof we spoke afore, by the council declared to be forfeited unto the king. Then he, who thus robbed us of all, did, as of great grace and favour, content himself with but five hundred pounds; which sum, as being far beyond that which we could pay, the Bishops did band together and become sureties for. That done, incontinently he demanded of us another five hundred pounds, that, as he averred, he had lent to us when we were Chancellor. Such sum we had of him, but as a royal and free gift; yet, forasmuch as it was his pleasure now to deprive us of it, we did



willingly let it go : knowing that it becometh not God's servants to wrangle about worldly wealth. And we were glad, yea right joyful, that we might thus make known unto him, as before by word, so now by deed, that while we would die for the least penny of the Church's wealth, of our own we made little care. Notwithstanding we did incline to say, as said he of old, " For it was not an enemy which " hath done me this dishonour, for then I could have " borne it ; neither was it mine adversary that did " magnify himself against me, for then peradventure " I could have hid myself from him : but it was " even thou, my companion, my guide, and my own " familiar friend ! "

" But," said Warel, as the Archbishop paused, " something I heard of embezzlement and extortion laid to your Paternity's charge ; may I crave if that were true,—or rather, as I hoped, a report as false as the accusation itself would have been ? "

" Thither am I coming, my son. It was on the day after, when it pleased the king to lay to our charge two hundred and fifty thousand marks ; these, as he constantly affirmed, we received in our Chancellorship for vacant benefices. Then was it that we might well perceive the small love which the Bishops bare us. Some were there, who ceased not to urge us, as though we had been guilty, that we should resign our See, and betake ourselves to the king's mercy ; others thought it unmeet to surrender after this fashion the privileges of the

Church; and yet did so speak of us, and deal by us, as if we were unmeet to company with them. When they could not agree touching their advice, we thought it good to send messengers to the king, craving him to delay the matter till yesterday; which with much difficulty he yielded unto. Yet it pleased God, that when we should have made our appearance before him, we were seized with so sudden and grievous a sickness, that our life was by the leech for some season despaired of: and as you may partly behold, unto our usual strength we have not yet attained. But to-day we determined to give our answer, even though we should perforce be carried on a couch into the great hall: and to-day accordingly will we go thither; though, God be thanked, in far other guise. And this morning, before thou camest, many Bishops visited us in our chamber, beseeching us to resign our See, and submit ourselves wholly unto the king: that thereby we might ourselves be set free from our present danger, and the kingdom, now as it were torn into two, might return to peace. To whom we made answer, that sooner would we be burnt alive than thus endanger the salvation of our souls, by deserting the cause of God."

"And what, holy Father, is the course which thou dost now intend to follow? For, as I well perceive, on this day hangeth the fortune of the Church. For, if your Fatherliness, which our Lady forefend! should be condemned, what security hath

the Church that her Head may not, at any time, when he runneth counter to those that would assault her, be by base treachery removed?"

"Leave the event, my son, to God, and the means to us. It waxeth near the hour wherein we appointed to celebrate Mass in this church. Wherefore see that all fitting preparations thereto be made with convenient speed; that we may, as it were, prepare ourselves, should God so order it, to be a sacrifice in which He may delight, by offering up That great Sacrifice for Whose sake He is propitious unto us."

The Sub-prior left the apartment, and the Archbishop was left alone to meditate on the behaviour which would befit him in his approaching time of trial.

CHAPTER IV.

HIGH Mass was said in the Priory church ; and the Archbishop, bearing in his hand the blessed Sacrament, descended from the Altar. That day he had chosen, as knowing the grand contest to which he was to be called, to officiate in his most precious vestments. The rich jewelled sandals, the thick gold fringes of the silken tunic and dalmatic, the green velvet chasuble, wrought round the collar with rubies, and inwrought with many an *étoile* and *maille* of small pearls ; the fringed ends of the stole appearing between the tunic and dalmatic ; the maniple studded with gems, the pall fastened on to the chasuble with golden pins, and symbolising the archiepiscopal dignity of the wearer, — made at Rome of the finest wool, from lambs shorn on S. Agnes' day, and blessed by the Pope himself ; the golden mitre, and rich gloves ; these were the armour which he then put on.

The scene and the spectators were well worthy of the drama about to be acted before them. The King and the Nobles were assembled in the great hall at Northampton ; the Bishops in their glorious vestments, the Barons and Knights had taken their seats ; esquires and retainers were in waiting ; and all eyes were turned to the door where the Archbishop was expected to make his entrance. Word was in the meanwhile brought of the manner in which he was advancing ; of the robes which he wore, as a Bishop who had just been celebrating the Holy Mysteries, and of the Host which he carried in his hand. Astonished and indignant that the Primate ventured thus to approach his tribunal, the King arose, and commanded the Bishops and Barons to accompany him into an inner room. Here a fearful scene of turbulence and clamour ensued ; the King denouncing the Primate as a traitor ; the Barons demanding his immediate punishment,—and that with such hideous outcries, that Roger, Archbishop of York, fearing that the Archbishop would have been murdered on the spot, hastily withdrew.

Becket meanwhile, attended by Warel and a few of his retainers, entered the great hall, which was almost deserted, and took his seat, patiently abiding the issue ; prepared for the worst result, and seeing from the downcast looks and secret whispers of his attendants that they expected it. Nothing terrified by the dark scowls of the retainers who were left in the hall, he kept up a conversation with those imme-

diately around him. Spite of the massy stone walls which divided the council-chambers, and the enormous portals of oak, clamped with iron and studded with nails, or rather sharpened bolts, the clamour from the interior when it swelled loudest was distinctly audible by the occupiers of the exterior room.

"Holy Father," said Warel at length, "surely thou hast now given sufficient proof of thy readiness to meet what accusation soever may be preferred against thee; and to defend, as a good champion, the Church over which thou hast been made overseer. Peradventure God giveth thee this breathing time, that thou mayest therein make thy escape from these blood-thirsty men, inasmuch as He hath further need of thy ministry hereafter."

"If it be His will, my son, that I should serve Him in time to come, He can deliver me now; if He hath no need of me, right willing am I to be offered up for His Name. But mark you, my son, how the wicked flee when no man pursueth; note well how an unarmed Christian Bishop putteth a host of armed knights, yea, and a king himself, to flight; so shalt thou learn how less than feeble is the strength and the wisdom and the confidence which pertain to this world and the prince of its power, when they be weighed against the unseen might which holy Church hath in herself, and bestoweth on her true sons."

As Becket spoke, the door opened, and the Bishop

of Exeter made his appearance alone. Coming straight to the Primate, he fell on his knees before him, and in a voice broken with tears said—

“I beseech thee, most holy Father, by all the love that thou bearest to those who have been born again unto salvation in the same waters with thyself, who have been accounted worthy to offer the same Venerable Sacrifice, who are CHRIST’s vicars in the same Church, that thou wilt have pity upon us, who on thy account suffer such miseries as those thou seest. The King is furious, the Barons threaten, the Bishops are timorous, the Church is in danger ; and that because thou, her chief pastor, rather considerest that which is taught in the schools as strictly just, than that which is practised among men as honourable and expedient. As GOD shall hereafter judge me, I do from my soul believe that thou art innocent in this sum which our master layeth to thy charge. But as things now be, thy innocence will rather turn to thy detriment than thy profit : for they who judge thee will make thee guilty whether thou art or not. This is not the season, venerable Father, to say that the rights of holy Church extend over the great men of this world ; neither canst thou appeal to our lord the Pope with expectation of profit thereby accruing ; for how should he dare to offend so mighty a Prince, when he might thereby throw off his rule, and acknowledge, as the emperor doth, the Antipope, his rival ? Yield then, Father, to the necessity of the times ; resign thy Arch-

bishoprick into the King's hands ; retire thyself into a religious house ; and leave the disposal of the Church at this time to him who will take it, whether thou leavest it or no. So gentle language wilt thou hear from none of the Prelates as from myself : so firm a well-wisher to thee hast thou none ; and that which I beseech with tears, they will demand with accusations and threats. Thou canst not benefit the Church, even shouldst thou die for her,—the which, except our Lady of special favour defend thee, thou runnest much danger to do ; and thus wilt ruin thyself, and us, and all who pertain to thee. Even now our venerable Brother of York withdrew from the council because he would not see thy death : and of much love I came forth to thee ; for the Lords be so furious against thee, that they will owe me small thanks for warning thee of thy danger."

Becket answered, " A piteous sight, truly, is it to behold a Christian Bishop kneeling, and with such a request in his mouth. Rise, brother : if thou wilt kneel, kneel to God, and beseech Him both to give me courage in this extremity, and to dispel thy own fear, which blindeth thine eyes, and perverteth thine heart. It is not with thee as with Gilbert of London, or Joceline of Salisbury ; right glad would they be of our downfall, as hoping to rise thereby. But what hast thou said to us, that might not have been, and peradventure was, uttered to our prede-



cessor, S. Alphege, of blessed memory ?\* He gave up his body to be stoned rather than pay ransom to the Paynim that held him in bondage; and he therefore hath a shrine on the spot that was hallowed by his blood at Greenwich, and a day for the devotions of the Faithful for ever. And thou wouldst have us,—us who have been fortified with the holy chrism, and girded with the venerable pall, to betray ourselves and our Church, that yielding to Christian men, which from him accursed Danes could not extort? *O Sancte Elphege, in istâ horâ tribulationum nostrarum, ora pro nobis !*"

"Then must thou follow, holy Father," replied the Bishop of Exeter, "the bent of thine own—madness must I call it, or fortitude? Thou hast chosen thine own way: full of perils and darkness it is; but this I verily believe, that if any Prelate in Christendom can tread it with safety and with honour, thou art he. Admire thee I may—follow thee I dare not. Our Lady and All Saints prosper thee !" And he left the hall.

"There mayest thou see," said Becket to Warel, "a notable example of the way of this world. He

\* S. Alphege, or Elphege, translated from Winchester to Canterbury in 1006, was taken prisoner by the Danes, and, refusing to ransom himself, stoned to death at Greenwich, where the parish church now stands, April 19, 1012, which day has ever since been observed by the English Church in honour of his Martyrdom. He is one of those whom Laud, in his speech on the scaffold, mentions as having "gone the same way, though not by the same means," with himself.

knoweth in his conscience that we do nothing but that which our duty bindeth us to do ; yet dareth he not to face the danger thence arising, but preferreth to keep the favour of the King, though thereby he incur the indignation of the Supreme King of Kings."

" May I crave of your Fatherliness," said Warel, " whether the Bishops and temporal Barons know by any means of the Absolution which his Holiness hath sent from the Clarendon oath? Otherwise, methinks, they will be much emboldened to proceed to any extremity whereto they may, by the fury of the ungodly men unto whom they are leagued, be driven and impelled."

" They know it not, my son : for hardly had we been able to obtain that bull at all, had it not been kept secret, but permitted in the stead thereof to be bruited abroad. Nevertheless, this know, that had we, by the malice or violence of our enemies, or the secret machinations of those who be in foreign countries, been deprived of the consolation and fortitude we have derived of that message from the Apostolic See, we should nathless have proceeded on all points similarly ; knowing this, that a wicked oath bindeth no man, whether he be absolved therefrom or not. And we do here confess that we were therein guilty of great and mortal sin, when yielding to the importunities of those who, as we since have discovered, bare little good will unto us ; for God He knoweth, we yielded not out of any fear of our

enemies. Penance therefore we have heretofore done; and we do here profess that for that crime we are not worthy to be reckoned with our predecessors, unless it shall please God that we may by our sufferings wipe out the stain of that error."

The great door at the upper end of the room creaked heavily on its hinges, and disclosed the whole body of Bishops advancing together. All who were seated in the council-chamber, except the Archbishop, arose; and the Prelates advanced to the chair of their Metropolitan, but slowly and uncertainly, and as if they were conscious how dastardly was the submission which they were lending to the civil power. Gilbert Foliot, lately translated from Hereford to London (and the first English Bishop of whose canonical translation we have authentic evidence), headed them. He had a stoop in his figure, and a bloated and unwieldy appearance, which entirely deprived him of a Prelate's dignity; and a downward and cunning look in his eye, which conveyed the impression, and not unjustly, of a man crafty enough in carrying on his designs, and not overscrupulous in the means he used to accomplish them. He was the only Bishop who at that time bore personal ill-will to Becket; the others were persuaded by him, or overawed by the king, into the hostile position which they now assumed. On his right was Joceline de Bailleul, Bishop of Salisbury: a man who, though not of strict and austere life, was very charitable to the poor, and a benefactor to

his church at Old Sarum, "the ark of God shut up in the temple of Baal," as from its damp and unhealthy situation, surrounded by bleak and barren hills, it was sometimes called. Hilary, Bishop of Chichester, a well-meaning but vain Prelate; Hugh, Bishop of Winchester, William de Waterville, lord Abbat of Peterborough, and Giles, Bishop of Hereford, were those who, as having been most active in the discussion in which the Prelates had just been engaged as to the proper course to be pursued, took their position nearest to Bishop Foliot. The latter then spoke, but more in the tone of a schoolboy repeating a lesson which he only half remembers, than in that of a Bishop making an announcement involving the fate of his superior.

"Holy Father," he said, "since by the command of our mighty lord and sovereign, Henry, we have met together in this place, divers charges and accusations have been, in part by him, in part by others, brought forward against your Paternity. The which it was his pleasure that we, in common with the temporal Barons, whom it had pleased him to summon, should question of, and seek into. Which task we undertook with the more willingness, in that we nothing doubted by such inquisition to purge your Fatherliness from the evil deeds laid to your charge, by making clear and manifest your integrity and perfect innocence of the same. When, however, nothing that we hoped appeared, but rather the contrary was made manifest, we looked

that you should have quitted the station which you held, and by penitence and devotion sought to do away those sins which so flagrantly became notorious, to the peril of your soul, the great infamy of the Church, and the scandal of all good Christian men. Even as it is written, *Qui celat peccatum non prosperabitur: qui autem confitebitur derelinquens ea, misericordiam inveniet*;—Whoso conceal-eth his sin shall not prosper; but he that confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy. Touching this matter, we have, as is well known unto all men, visited you once and again; beseeching you in season and out of season, even with many tears, to lay down your dignity, and return unto a humble life. With how unkind and threatening a countenance you have ever received us, and with how bitter reproaches you have taunted us, in that we rather cleave to our Sovereign than to the headstrong imaginations of ungodly and ambitious men, it needeth us not now to repeat. Wherefore, seeing that those our brotherly admonitions you have despised and contemned, duty willeth that we come unto you in another manner; with how great sorrow and bitterness of heart, God He knoweth, and all good men may partly guess. Therefore, by the consent of the Bishops and Abbats in this parliament assembled, I do hereby declare, that from this time forward, we do utterly renounce and repudiate all subjection unto you as Primate; that we shall appeal to our lord the Pope against you. as a perjured

man, and thereby canonically incapable, according to the decrees and customs of the Holy Catholick Church, to exercise any authority, power, pre-eminence, or rule, as Bishop ; and finally, that we shall in his court proceed against you to the utmost, that we may procure of him your deprivation."

To this harangue Becket quietly answered, "I hear." A deep silence ensued: the Bishops looked one on another, as not knowing what was to come next. They had hoped some answer from the Primate, to which they could have made some plausible rejoinder; as it was, they were completely put to a nonplus. And their confusion was increased by the very evident tokens of suppressed mirth which prevailed amongst the rude feudal retainers, who crowded the hall, at the silence of Bishop Foliot after his long and laboured harangue.

A very seasonable relief to the Prelates was afforded by the arrival of a deputation from the King and the Barons.

"Sir Archbishop," said Robert Earl of Leicester, who headed it, "the King commandeth you by us, either to give us your accounts incontinently, or else from our mouth to hear your sentence."

"No, my son!" said the Primate, rising, "hear me first. Free was I given to the Church at first; discharged I was, at my election to the See of Canterbury, from all antecedent debts: therefore accounts will I never give. Furthermore, neither law nor reason permitteth that sons should judge

their fathers. Wherefore the jurisdiction of the King I decline, as not extending to this case; and I appeal to God, and to my Lord the Pope, at whose judgment-seat I stand. For you, my brethren the Bishops, thither I summon you also, to make answer for fearing man more than God. And I commit myself and the Church of Canterbury to the care of God, and of my Lord the Pope, under whose protection I depart hence."

So saying, and followed by Warel and his vassals, the Archbishop left the hall with the same state in which he had entered it. So utterly unexpected was his movement, that the Bishops and Barons stood in stupid astonishment, till the shout which burst from the crowd on the outside, by whom the Primate was already looked upon as a confessor for the Church, recalled them to themselves.

"God's malison on him!" said Sir William de Tracy: "we be the laughing-stock of the rabble rout! Why did we not arrest him on the spot?"

"Marry," said the Earl of Leicester, "he hath fairly given us the slip. Who would have deemed that the proud Prelate had so much courage in him?"

"I would the matter might end here," observed Bishop Foliot. "But now cometh all the toil and vexation of an appeal to the Pope; and we ever knew how his Holiness lent a favourable ear to this Becket."

"Dead men make no appeals," said Sir William

de Tracy: "had I known the cunning counsel that worked in his brain, he should not have 'scaped me so."

"Now, God forefend," returned the Earl of Leicester, "that we should do violence to a churchman, and he a Prelate! Verily guilty he is; and so far as we may by law and with a safe conscience, let us proceed against him: further than that comporteth neither with the honour of a knight, nor the good health of a Christian soul."

"It seemeth to me," said Abbat de Waterville, "that we ought to know the king's pleasure herein: wherefore, I propose that we return into the Council-chamber, there to lay the matter before his princely wisdom."

"Peradventure," said the Bishop of Exeter, "Becket hath but retired to send us his resignation with the less down-coming of his pride. I did but now speak to him before your lordships did come into the hall; and to me he seemed not altogether averse therefrom."

"No, my lord," replied the Bishop of London, "while he is alive he will never give it up; it must be wrested from him. Nevertheless, if it so please your lordships, let us return unto the king."

"A gallant knight would this Primate have made," said the Earl of Leicester. "Right bishopfully hath he borne himself throughout the whole parliament. Verily chain corslet covereth some-



times less hardy heart than beateth under his pall."

"Easy enough," answered William de Tracy, "is it to shew a bold face when a man is bucklered behind his back with so rascal a following. Go you as afore, my lords," he continued: "if his Lordship of Leicester will grant me a word or two, we will follow directly to the King."

The rest moved on, and Tracy proceeded: "My lord, while these lazy churchmen be on our side, we shall make no progress in this matter. Your lordship hath the King's ear; use it, I pray, to make him against this haughty Bishop, by not suffering his appeal to be carried to Rome."

"Something too warmly, in my poor judgment, Sir William de Tracy, do you pursue this quarry," returned the other. "Doubtless, the matter craveth more impartial counsel than these Bishops will give; but the King hath many other laymen with him besides ourselves, who all bear love to Becket little enough."

"Now, my lord, wot you the reason why Odo of Canterbury came not hither? It standeth me much to see him; for, as I hear, Sir Ranulph de Broc, to whom my sister was left in guardianship, is deceased, and hath commended her to the care of this Odo, till he to whom she is affianced, the son of the old knight, cometh home to claim her hand. But where he hath bestowed her I know not, and hoped to have heard from his own mouth in this place."

"Something, if I remember me," replied his friend, "was said touching a sudden illness where-with he was seized. But most men deem that he rather held himself excused, because he would have nought to do with sitting in judgment on the Archbishop, whom he holdeth in great veneration."

"For my own part," said Tracy, "so soon as this matter is settled I shall journey to Canterbury, to set in order my own matters there. But now let us follow the rest, and see how the King receiveth the news of Becket's audacity."

## CHAPTER V.

IT was the tenth night after these events that Eadwith, the wife of Stigand, a serf on the estate of the See of Winchester, in a wild and unfrequented part of Surrey, was watching, in her wretched hovel, the feverish slumbers of her baby. It was a wild night in the beginning of November: the wind swept across the common, driving sheets of rain before it; sometimes rushing and roaring in the old oak wood on the hill above the house; sometimes growling and grappling like a wild beast in the roof itself; and sometimes shaking the ill-hung door, as if it would tear it from the hinges. Stigand was gone to seek the parish priest, fearing the baby would not overlive the night, and determined that it should not depart without the Holy Sacrament of Baptism. On the wood-fire a cake of dough was baking, and an ill-looking wiry-haired cur lay on the sheep's skin, which served as a rug. Suddenly

the dog started to its feet, and pricking up its ears began to bark violently.

"Down, Odin! quiet, cur!" said the poor mother. "Oh, my baby, that wretched beast has awaked you!"

While she vainly tried to hush the baby, the dog flew to the door, and scented eagerly at its sill; and at the same time a heavy hand was heard shaking the upper panel, and a voice, half-drowned by the wind, seemed to be demanding admittance.

"S. Edmund, S. Erkenwald, S. Ethelred, S. Alphege!" said the woman, stringing together her Saxon saints;" "S. Oswald, S. Wulfstan, S. Chad, S. Alkmund, S. Wilfred, preserve us!" And then in a voice that trembled with terror, she demanded who was there.

"Open the door for our Lady's love!" said the voice: "here be two poor monks have perished with the rain and cold! Open the door to the friendless, and the benison of S. Giles be upon you."

"If you be robbers," answered Eadwith, "I cannot keep you out; and if you be honest men, welcome! Lie down, Odin!" she continued, opening the door.

The fierce wind drove a raindrift in at the open door, as two men, drenched from head to foot, but vested as Benedictine monks, entered. It was shut to again, and fastened with the oak bar. The wanderers gladly hung over the fire, spreading out their

hands to catch its heat : Eadwith threw on fresh logs ; and the bright red glare of the burning wood danced on the rude logwalls, shewing at one corner a rude bed of sheepskins, a mud floor, a pitched roof, from the windbeam of which hung a cross-bow and pruning-knife. A hole was broken through it, at which the smoke found a vent, except when it preferred eddying down into the house. A kind of shelf held a bundle of rushes for light, and a few quarrels for the cross-bow. Over the fire hung a side of bacon ; from which the goodwife, being now certified of the character of her visitors, cut some savoury rashers, and set them on to broil, at the same time giving the cake another turn.

"Now our Lady be praised for this shelter !" said the elder of the travellers ; "and poor though we be, we will try to repay it to you, my daughter. How call you this place ?"

"The nighest village," replied Eadwith, "is called Horne : but a long league is it thither. My husband went there at nightfall, and is not yet returned."

"Are we in Kent or in Surrey, my daughter ?" asked the other.

"In Surrey, father," answered the woman, "and nigher to Sussex than Kent, and yet not far from that neither. The sun at noonday stands right over Worth, which lieth in Sussex ; at night he setteth behind Cowden, which is the first village in Kent. Hush, my baby !" she continued, as the child again

began to cry ; and attempted to soothe it with the "Up-a-day !" which has descended to our nurseries from Saxon times.

"Aileth the child anything?" enquired the younger traveller.

"I fear me," answered the mother with tears, "that it is not long for this world,—and he is my only one. His father is even now gone for Edred the chaplain, that it may not depart unbaptized."

"God shield it should do so!" said the other. "But hark! there is a hand on the lintel!"

Eadwith, knowing her husband's sign, flew to the door; and Odin, hearing by the step that it was his master, flew thither too, in a paroxysm of joy: for though he had been made to keep the peace towards the strangers, he evidently did not like their proximity.

"It is of no use, wife," began Stigand, "the chaplain is off and away, and returneth not till the morrow. Now, S. Martin defend us! who are these?" he added, as he caught sight of the strangers.

"Holy monks," replied his wife, "that were benighted on our common, and that sought for shelter here."

"And that will supply the chaplain's lack to your baby, if you wish it, my son," added the elder, who was addressed by the other as Father Francis.

The father having accepted the offer with joy, the simple form of Private Baptism was gone

through by the monk ; who then enquired with what disease the child was afflicted. " Then," he continued, addressing the other, " thou, brother Martin, hast some skill in leechery,—canst thou do any thing ?"

Brother Martin took the child from the mother, who waited for his decision with as much eagerness as the criminal tried for his life listens for the verdict of the jury. Perceiving that the cause of the malady arose from the child's teething, he soon gave it immediate relief with his lancet, and returned it to the grateful mother, who could now almost have worshipped her visitors, declaring that they had saved her child, body and soul.

" Give the thanks where they are due,—to God Who sent us hither, my daughter," said brother Francis," and take it as a reward for your hospitality ; and henceforth, as blessed Paul saith, " be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

" And now, holy Father," said Stigand, " partake of what we can set before you. Better should you have, if we had it. And I and my wife will wait upon you."

" We eat not," said brother Francis, " unless we all sit down together. It is not meet that the hosts should serve, while the guests feast."

" It shall be, Father, as you desire," replied the other : " but it befits not that we, poor Saxons, should sit down with Normans."

"I am a Saxon myself, my son," said brother Francis.

"I should have scarce thought so, Father," returned the other, "from your tongue; for your Saxon hath a courtly savour of Norman."

"Much have I mingled in the world," said the monk, "and thence, perhaps, have I lost something of the freshness of my father's language. But though I have sat at feasts in larger halls than this, never met I with fare that, with the sauce of my good hunger, did so please my palate before."

"Hear you of any news toward?" asked brother Martin, after a pause.

"None," said the Saxon, "save that there is hot pursuit made in these parts after Archbishop Becket. They say the king is marvellous much enraged that he did escape from him. God send him, say I, a good deliverance!"

"Amen," said both monks. "But," continued the younger, "hear you ought where he bestoweth himself?"

"That can none find out," was the answer. "They say that they can track him to Reading Abbey; but further than that they have no trace of him. Some say he lurketh there still; some that he is dead; and some that he hath taken ship and escaped into France."

"Went any with him when he fled from Northampton?" asked brother Martin.

"Two only, as I hear," answered his host. "Poor



man! he is sorely hunted of his enemies; and all, as father Edred telleth us, because he will not yield that holy Church should take detriment. But I trust God will deliver him out of their hands."

"Even," said Eadwith, "as He did that good Bishop, of whom Father Edred taught us, who was called Daniel, and was thrown into a den of lions, because he would not bow down before idols of wood and stone; and he told us farthermore how one Sir Habaccua, a knight of great valour, delivered him therefrom."

"I have read the story, daughter," remarked brother Francis, "though not quite in the way in which you tell it. And now, my good host, if you will spread a sheepskin or two for us near to the fire, right glad shall we be to lay us down thereon."

The skins having been spread, the visitors having commended themselves to God, and said Compline, according to the Benedictine use, lay down to rest. Often as each of them had felt the beauty of the three Psalms there appointed, the 4th, the 90th, and the 134th, and of S. Ambrose's Hymn, *Te lucis ante terminum*, never did they come so soothingly and so affectionately on their minds as now. When Stigand and his wife gave evident tokens of being in a profound sleep, the elder of the travellers said, in Norman French, to his companion, "Sleep-est thou, Warel?"

"Not so, holy Father," answered the Sub-prior; "I am ready to act as your Paternity thinks best."

"Thou seest, my son," said the Archbishop, with what perils we are environed, and what hot pursuit there is made on our footsteps. Our flight must be indeed of all men noised abroad, when such a hovel as this is full of it."

"It was in my thought," observed Warel, "a thing ordered of God, that we should leave thy deacon Roland behind us at Reading. For, as your Paternity may perceive, the rumour goeth constantly that we be three in company."

"I would," said the Archbishop, "that we could leave this place while our hosts sleep; for this Stigand seemeth a shrewd fellow, although I think me—and I have been used to judge of men by their countenances—an honest. But, an we could get from the cottage without arousing them, we know not which way to turn, and the rain still poureth in cataracts."

"If you still, Father, hold purpose of embarking at Sandwich, we have nearly the whole length of Kent to traverse. Yet in your own diocese there be many places where to make ourselves known would not be inconvenient."

"Great terror must the king be in, when he sendeth an embassage so gloriously decked unto the Apostolic See; as thinking to overcome the exiled Bishop by the gawd of jewels, or blaze of gold; or that the chair of S. Peter would give judgment against the wronged and oppressed, because the oppressor is powerful, and the other hath no comforter."

"Nevertheless, with your Fatherliness's leave, it would seem well, if it be possible, that thou shouldest plead thy cause to our lord the Pope, before the others can reach his court."

"To GOD we have commended ourselves, my son, and the holy Church of Canterbury, now in extreme peril; and He will guide both it and ourselves as seemeth Him best. Our former purpose for Sandwich will we hold, partly because our tenants there are to us and to our cause well disposed; but chiefly because thither our son Roland goeth, by byeways, to meet us. Such haste as we may make, being on foot, and not daring to take horse, we will not be backward in; and if so be that we arrive in France first, we shall not grieve. But now, commending ourselves to the holy Mother of God, let us betake ourselves to sleep."

Stigand and his wife were up early: but earlier than their waking had the monks performed their devotions; and the *Jactamur heu quot fluctibus!* came seasonably to their consolation; a hymn which we shall take the liberty of thus paraphrasing:

"We lift our eyes, oppressed with ills,  
Up to the everlasting hills;  
Thither our groans and prayers we send,  
Thither our hopes and longings tend!  
  
Readier to hear than we to pray,  
FATHER, Thy Hand shall guide our way;  
And our infirmity is strong  
In Thee, O GOD, our strength and song.

The threat'ning ills that round us swell,  
O Mightier than the mightiest, quell ;  
And let the soul that hangs on Thee,  
Feel that Thy Arm hath set her free.

Celestial glory shall array,  
Ere long, this vesture of decay :  
Glory that must by toil be won,  
For who is crowned except he run ?

O happy toil, whose end is blest  
With joy, and calm, and endless rest !  
Well may one sorrowing night be borne,  
When gladness cometh with the morn !

Glory to GOD the FATHER be,  
Now, and to all eternity ;  
To GOD the SON, as aye is meet,  
To GOD the HOLY PARACLETE !"

It was a lovely autumn morning when, the simple meal ended, and the benediction bestowed, Becket and his follower set out, under the guidance of their host, to East Grinstead ; intending from thence, by the most circuitous route, as being that which would be the least suspected, to reach Canterbury. The tract through which they passed is singularly beautiful ; as uniting in itself, the wildness of Surrey, the richness of Kent, and a glorious horizon of the Sussex Downs. And no marvel, that by the time they bade their guide adieu, the hearts of the Archbishop and of Warel, feeling the silent influence of Nature's beauties, had assumed a calm and placid determination, to which they had been strangers since the hasty flight from Northampton.

## CHAPTER VI.

SCARCELY had two hours elapsed since Eadwith had been left by her guests, and Stigand had not yet returned, when she was surprised by the appearance of two knights, who, followed by a numerous band of retainers, reined up their foaming horses at the door.

"Ho, ho!" cried the foremost; "dwelleth Stigand here?"

"He dwelleth here, an please your lordship," said Eadwith, "but he is not now within."

"Lord me no lords, woman," returned the other, "but answer me plainly where he tarrieth?"

"He is gone, an please you, to guide certain poor monks on their way that tarried here last night."

"Then, by our Lady, we are right, Fitz-Urse!" said the other. "Woman, you must come along with us; your simplicity shall not avail you: you knew well enough that you were giving shelter to that

arch-traitor, Thomas of Canterbury. We will see that you obtain due punishment according to your deserts."

"I pray your honours," said the poor woman, trembling, "only to tarry till my husband cometh home; he knoweth no more herein than I; and he can set the matter straight with your honours."

"Which way went he?" asked Reginald Fitz-Urse.

"Towards East Grinstead," replied Eadwith: "your honours shall surely meet him if you ride thitherward."

"Marry, so we will," said the first speaker, who was none other than William de Tracy: "and thither shalt thou too; for thou art, I nothing doubt, playing us false herein."

"Then," said Eadwith, driven to desperation, "go if I must, I will; but I advise you for your own sakes, Sir Knights, to beware how you touch us: vassals are we of Odo of S. Augustine's, and right of *infang-thief*\* hath he in all his lands."

"By my faith, De Tracy," cried Fitz-Urse, "I believe she speaketh truth herein; and if the matter be so, we were best beware: for the king will owe us small thanks for trespassing on the immunities of the Church, now that it standeth him much to be on good terms with the Bishops who cleave unto him."

"To Canterbury are we bound, woman," said De Tracy, "and thither will we carry thee: to Odo

\* *Infangen-theof*, Anglo-Saxon for *certain manorial rights*.

himself I will accuse thee of sheltering a traitor, and the shaven monk dareth not herein to shield thee. Here, Siward! thine is the best horse—make the dame mount behind thee. Saxon carry Saxon, they say. But what! surely we are not to be burthened with the brat?" he added, seeing that the mother was carefully folding it up in her bosom.

"Let her take it," returned Fitz-Urse: "small trouble will it be to us, or to Siward's horse." And Siward, with a fellow-feeling for his country-woman, assisted her on, and gave the baby into her arms.

The following day, the repast was spread as usual in the hall of S. Augustine's at Canterbury. The Abbat was at the head of the long oak table; the monks in seemly order, arranged down its side. At his right was Eadbald the Prior; and a busy conversation was going on between these, in which the rest of the company joined but little. The huge heavy vaults of the Norman building, its small windows, and cold stone floor, the raised dais of oak, black and shining, the walls, adorned with frescoes of various legends, the stone lectorium,—all were tinted with the glare of the fire that burnt in the middle of the hall. The day was within the Octave of All Saints: and capons and venison pasty were plentifully displayed on the table; there was also stock-fish for those who preferred it; and Milton oysters, then of the same celebrity as now, were served out of the barrel. Mead there

was, and hippocras, and ale ; but many of the holy monks drank nothing but water drawn from S. Augustine's well.

"A wonderful man, truly, is Thomas of Canterbury," said Eadbald to the Abbat : "how hath he set at nought prince and prelate at Northampton. How gallantly did he bear himself when he left the hall, as one that, trusting in God, feared not man nor what man could do unto him."

"They say, moreover," returned Odo, "that our good friend Warel bare himself as became a Churchman. But as to the Archbishop, strange it seemeth to me, and very marvellous, that we should have heard nothing where he bestoweth himself. Rumour saith that he was hospitably entertained one night of our brethren at Reading, and that two monks bare him company, one whereof was, in my thought, our Sub-prior ; but how he came, or whither he went, none can guess ; and divers marvellous rumours there be concerning him afloat, to which we, for our parts, yield no manner of credit."

"Some say that he still lieth at Reading," remarked the other, "and peradventure it is so. For how, save by special providence, he should escape so strict a search as that which it hath pleased the king to cause to be made after him, surpasseth my poor comprehension."

"Confidently is it asserted of some, that he hath been seen here in Canterbury since he departed from the Parliament. What to believe, I know not.



This, however, is therein comforting, because the variety of rumours must marvellously perplex his blood-thirsty enemies, whom God confound !”

As the Abbat pronounced this anathema, word was brought, by one of the servitor-brethren, that Sir William de Tracy and Sir Reginald Fitz-Urse desired to speak with the Abbat on business of great moment. Odo, greatly annoyed, and somewhat alarmed, desired him to pray the Knights to partake of their poor entertainment, and to agrace them with their presence in the refectory.

“These be two of his most pestilent enemies,” quoth the Abbat, when the message was taken ; “the knight De Tracy thirsteth like a lion for his blood. Who would think that he and the Lady Agnes were sprung of the same stock ? As well might we look for the rose and the nightshade to bloom on the same tree, or the lamb and the lion to be brought up in the same fold.”

“They have been little together,” returned Ead-bald, “if I have heard their story aright. Is it not so, holy Father ?”

“Marvellous little,” said Odo. “Sir Maurice de Tracy, the father, (whom God assoilzie !) died in Holy Land ; and the son went incontinently to the Court, where he hath since tarried, falling in with ungodly and wicked men, who make a mock of all godliness, denying by their deeds the Holy Catholick Faith : but the Lady Agnes was brought up right tenderly of Sir Ranulph de Broc, and his

deceased lady, now with God, and great benefactors to us. And to his son, who is now in Holy Land, or, as we would rather say, on his journey thither, is she affianced."

"The Knights, holy Father," said the messenger, who now returned, "hold them excused; but desire that you will tarry no longer over the table than shall suit your earliest convenience. Rude and godless men are they," he continued, "and they have a woman in bondage with them, who tarrieth outside the house."

"Say we will come incontinently, my son," returned the Abbat. And the repast being now concluded, Odo rising up began the prayer.

"We yield thee, O merciful Father, most hearty thanks for all Thy benefits: Who livest and reignest for ever and ever." "He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor," he continued. "And His righteousness," was the response, "remaineth for ever."—"I will bless the LORD at all times." "His praise," answered the Choir, "shall ever be in my mouth."—"O magnify," returned the Abbat, "the LORD with me!" "And let us exalt," responded the monks, "His Name together!"—"Blessed," said the Abbat, "be the name of the LORD!" "From this time forth and for evermore," they replied. Then he added, "Reward, we beseech Thee, O LORD, all those who shall do good deeds for Thy Name's sake, with eternal life!" And altogether they joined in the concluding suppli-

cation, "May the souls of the Faithful, through the mercy of God, rest in peace! Amen."

Leaving the refectory, Abbat Odo, who asked Eadbald to accompany him, bent his way to his private parlour; whither by his directions the Knights had been conducted.

"I am glad, Sir Abbat," began De Tracy in a contemptuous manner, "that your health, whereof you sent excuse to our Lord and Sovereign, permitteth you to enjoy again the pleasures of the refectory."

"Seeing, my son, that there be now some twenty days since I received that summons, cause for wonder there is none, that I should, though then prevented by ill-health from undertaking so long and perilous a journey, now have returned to my accustomed strength. But may I crave, Sir Knight, since you are not in general a frequenter of Religious houses, as fame reporteth, to what cause our poor Monastery is now indebted for the honour of your presence?"

"Two causes," began De Tracy, in a more respectful tone of voice; "two causes have moved me hither. The one, that I would fain enquire where you have bestowed the Lady Agnes my sister, whom, as I am given by credible witnesses to understand, the knight Sir Ranulph de Broc did, on his death-bed, commit unto your guardianship."

"Willingly, my son," replied Odo, "will I answer so reasonable a request. The Lady Agnes, who

was much cast down at the death of Sir Ranulph, whom God pardon, abideth with our venerable sister the Abbess of S. Mary's in this city ; where, I nothing doubt, free access may you have to her, within such limits as are by the rules of that house touching such a case ordained."

"The second point, holy Father, wherein I would crave information, or rather redress, concerneth another matter. It pleased the King's grace to appoint me and this good knight, Sir Reginald Fitz-Urse, among divers others of his servants, to make inquisition on the flight of that traitor, Thomas of Canterbury ; and both they and we used no small diligence in the matter. It was our good hap to trace him as far as Reading: but thence, for long time, we could obtain no further news concerning him. Two days ago, we did, upon enquiry in divers parts of Surrey, hear of certain two monks, who passing from one obscure village to another, and avoiding all highways and resorts of men, did still bend their course eastward ; and moreover, as from those who had seen most of them we were well assured, the one of them differed not much in height, comportment, mien, and appearance, from him whom we sought. That night they lay at a lone cottage on the manor of Horne, which, as we hear, appertaineth to this house. Yesternorning early we beset the doors, but the quarry had escaped ; and none found we therein, but one miserable woman, who told us that her husband was even then conducting

the monks whom she had lodged towards East Grinstead. This she freely confessed ; but denied that she knew any further therein, either as to whom she had sheltered, or whither they were bound. Nothing doubting that she herein played us false, we set her on the horse of one of our retainers, and set forward to the town whereof she had told us. But neither in the road, nor elsewhere, met we her husband either going or returning. Which thing confirming us in these our suspicions, we thought good to bring her on hither, since the manors of S. Augustine's Abbey have, as we hear, the privilege of *infang-thief*. Else did we feel enmoved to have punished her, as she deserved, on the spot."

"Now, by S. Mary!" returned the Abbat, "but this passeth. Here is a woman, the property of this Abbey, dragged away by force by lawless men, on certain vague suspicions, which they are not able to verify. An I did that which ye deserve, I should lay complaint hereof before the king's grace incontinently."

"Small meed, holy Father, wouldst thou gain by that. The king is enraged against Becket to that degree, that his shelterers would find little favour in his eyes. Nay, rather thou owest us thanks for that we have done. If we had accused this woman before thee, thou must either have summoned her to Canterbury, to be judged in thy court, or appointed a commission to take cognizance of her cause where she dwelleth. Of both the

trouble and expense of which thou hast been eased by our setting her here before thee ; and, as I am belted knight, she hath been well cared for on the way."

"Sir Knight," replied Odo, "seek not to make that which is unjustifiable worse, by seeking to justify it. Cause the woman to be brought into the great hall, where we do accustomably administer justice. And there will we join thee."

The Knights withdrew ; and the Abbat, in great perplexity, walked up and down the room. At length he said, "What are we herein to do, brother Eadbald ? A sore infraction of our privileges is this that these Knights have done ; yet no less certain is it, that had this information been laid before us against the woman whom they speak of, we must at all times, and more especially now that the king observeth the Church with so jealous eyes, have enquired either personally or by deputy into the accusation."

"If I might advise, holy Father," said Eadbald, who like the Abbat himself was very cautious by nature, "I would let the matter take its own way. We may not strive with the civil power therein. Thou canst well favour this poor woman ; and, as far as thou canst without open manifestation of prejudice in her behalf, thou art bound to do it : but further, as I think, none can blame thee for not going."

"I am inclined to follow thy advice," returned

Odo; "the rather that the accusation even if, which I much doubt me it is not, well founded, will nevertheless be hard to prove. Lead on to the hall."

## CHAPTER VII.

THE news soon spread through the Abbey that a woman was to be tried by the lord Abbat, on suspicion of having sheltered Thomas of Canterbury. The hall was soon filled; the monks stood by the side walls, the chair of state was left for the Abbat on the dais; the Knights had taken a seat at the lower end of the hall, and their retainers with Eadwith, who still held her baby, clustered behind them. The silver cross gleamed in the archway; and immediately afterwards the Abbat and a few monks entered: he passed up the middle of the room, and took his seat in the chair prepared for him. All who were sitting rose as he advanced.

"We have been told," he began, "that the two Knights, William de Tracy and Reginald Fitz-Urse, have, out of their abundant zeal for the king's honour, though with some neglect of the privileges granted to this Abbey by King Ethelbert of blessed



memory, and confirmed thereto by succeeding kings and princes, as well Saxon as Norman, down to the present time, have, on a certain manor of ours, arrested, and by force carried before us, the wife of one of our serfs, alleging against her that she gave reception and shelter to Thomas, by Divine loving-kindness, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury and Metropolitan of All England: he, the said Thomas, being a man then proscribed as a traitor—whether rightly or wrongly skilleth us not now to enquire—and bringing thereby with him a traitor's portion on those who give him harbourage and comfort. This have we learnt from the said Knights themselves, who be here in court to make their words good; and now we desire to learn from the prisoner herself what she knoweth herein. Come forth, woman! and speak boldly; for God shield we should not do justice to the meanest."

Eadwith, hitherto kept back by her captors, came hastily forward, and gathering courage from her despair, said, "O my lord Abbat, stand my good lord, I pray you! I know nothing of what these Knights have laid to my charge; I never saw the Archbishop; I never gave him refuge wittingly; and if I did it unwittingly, I pray you to pardon me."

"I would wish thee," replied the Abbat, "laying aside all fear, to speak boldly, and to lay open to us the whole of the matter from the beginning. Tell us, therefore, how these monks came to you, and how of you they were received."

“Pleaseth your lordship, it was two nights agone that I was sitting alone in the house of my husband, Stigand, a serf of your reverence, with this baby, then, as I deemed, dying; and my husband was gone forth to fetch Father Edred the chaplain, lest the infant should die unbaptized. Then did two monks present themselves at the door, and beg, in our Lady’s name, for shelter. And I, being ever taught of Father Edred that to give shelter to the hungry and houseless was one of the good works of Holy Church, did take them in and lodge them; and my husband, when he came back, did aid me in ministering unto them. He that was the elder did baptize my baby; and he that was the younger, and seemed to be his *learning knight*,\* did cure him of that which he ailed. And the next day they went on their way; and my husband went forth to guide them. And then came these Knights, and by force took me away with them.”

“Then,” inquired the Abbat, “thou knewest nothing of who these men were, or whither they were bound?”

“No,” she replied: “as God shall judge me, I have told the truth, and all the truth herein.”

“Sir Knight,” said the Abbat, “the story which this woman telleth seemeth to me likely in all points. What! would you have had her drive away two monks that begged on a cold tempestuous night for shelter? Would you have had her leave them to

\* *Leorning-cniht*, Anglo-Saxon for *disciple*.

perish? Shame on the teaching of the pastor, to whom she belongeth, if thus hard-hearted she had been, the rather when they performed two works of mercy in her house."

"My lord Abbat," replied the Knight, who knew where the old man's weak point lay, "it is manifest that you are no well-wisher to the king in his quarrel with the haughty Church of Canterbury; otherwise you would grant me a larger measure of justice herein. Here do we bring a positive accusation, and you put us off by telling us it is not likely. I am ready to swear that this woman knoweth more herein than she hath said; and I demand that she be put to the torture, to the verifying of her innocence."

"By thine own confession," retorted the Abbat, "thou hast no further means of knowing the truth of this matter than we have; and the case being so, how canst thou swear that *that* was, which thou thinkest, and only thinkest, likely to have been?"

"I am a plain knight," returned De Tracy, "and understand little of thy scholastical niceties; and thy arguments, howsoever they may stand thee in stead here, will little serve thee before the king, to whom I shall appeal."

"Thou art a plain villain," muttered Eadbald to Odo, "that there can be little doubt of; but what purposeth your Fatherliness to do herein?"

"I demand to be sworn," persevered the Knight. "Will your lordship grant me my desire herein?"

"If we a grace him in this," said Odo aside to the Prior, "what will become of the woman, who, on our conscience, is innocent? And yet how to refuse him, without incurring the king's great displeasure?"

"Had we been able to foresee how bold-faced a villain this would have approved himself, we would not have granted him to accuse the woman at first; but would have resisted him as a violator of our rights. But now, having granted him one thing, we can scarce refuse him the other."

"Does your Reverence hear our demand," said Reginald Fitz-Urse; "or must we depart without justice?"

"I hear and grant it, my sons," replied the Abbat. "Let the Book of the Evangele be given to Sir William de Tracy, and Sir Reginald Fitz-Urse, that they may be sworn to the truth of their allegation."

The oath of the accusers was then taken; and a silence followed.

"Daughter," said the Abbat, "the accusations here preferred against thee we may not reject. We would fain have believed thy innocence, and would fain hope it still. But such be our laws, that there only remain two ways in which thy innocence can be made good: the one, that by a champion of knightly rank thou makest plain thy freedom of that which is laid to thy account. Art thou prepared to do this?"

"Oh, my good lord," said the poor woman, "how

can one like me have a knight to my friend? If that way alone I can be saved, I must indeed perish!"

"Besides this," said the Abbat, "there yet remaineth the direct appeal to God, Who is the searcher of all hearts, in the trial by ordeal. This, if thou art prepared to demand, we are prepared to give."

"Then," said the poor mother, "to God will I appeal: for Father Edred hath taught us that He is the Helper of them that be innocent, and have none other defender; and He knoweth my innocence in this thing; and your lordship beholdeth that I have none other earthly friend."

"Let a note be made hereof," said the Abbat, "and let it be read for the satisfaction of all men." A monk, who acted as notary, drew out the document, and it was read as follows:

"Sir William de Tracy, knight, and Sir Reginald Fitz-Urse, knight, make oath and say, that Eadwith, the wife of Stigand, a vassal of this Abbey of S. Augustine, on the manor of Horne, did knowingly and of set purpose receive and entertain Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, in her house, on this third day of November last past; and they furthermore aver their belief that she, the said Eadwith, knoweth where the said Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, now bestoweth himself; contrary to the proclamation by our gracious Sovereign Lord, King Henry, at the Council of Northampton, lately issued. And

the said Eadwith saith that she did not wittingly and of intent give harbourage unto the said Thomas as before. And being asked if she would by her champion compurge herself, she made answer, that she had none. And being further asked, if she would confess herself to be guilty, she made answer, that she appealeth unto God. And Odo, Lord Abbat of S. Augustine's in Canterbury, upon these premises considered, giveth order that it shall be as by the accused is required: and chargeth both her, and her accusers, and all men herein concerned, that they present themselves in the Abbey church at the hour of three this afternoon, there to follow out the appeal in form and manner prescribed by the Holy Church."

"And, in the mean time," said Abbat Odo, "we shall take fitting care that the accused be bestowed in some meet house in the city, and that a priest be allowed to visit her, but none else. Until which time we dissolve this court."

The great bell of the Cathedral and of S. Ethelbert's Tower had tolled three, when the Abbat, preceded and followed more gorgeously than usual, crossed the great square, and entered the western door of the church. He wore a cope of purple velvet, wrought down the sides with figures of saints in raised gold; an alb of the finest silk, and of a pale pinkish hue; and the white linen amice was kept in its place by a small pellet of lead at each end. The golden staff, with the crook turned

inwards, and displaying on its interior flower-knop a Holy Lamb curiously wrought of great rubies, and the silver cross, flowered richly, and having at its extremities the Evangelistic symbols, preceded him. On entering the nave, he found it thronged with spectators: he had commanded that many should be admitted, in order that the fairness of the whole proceedings might have the greater number of witnesses. At its upper end, in a chair provided for the occasion, sat Alan de Grier, Mayor of Canterbury, with some of the ealdermen, and the sheriff-deputy; to whom, as representatives of the civil power, the prisoner would be delivered over, in case of being found guilty. The knights were in attendance; and the prisoner having been sent for, was set opposite to them: both were immediately on the western side of the stone rood-screen we have mentioned before; the accusers on the north, the accused on the south. The light tracery of the roodscreen, which was then only just put up, and consequently of Early English date, prevented hardly at all the Abbat and the monks, as they filled the stalls of the Choir, from seeing and being seen by, those who crowded the nave.

The *Pater Noster*, and *Deus in adjutorium*, wherewith the Church Catholick then commenced all her services, having been said, the psalms were chanted. And it was enough to quell the stoutest sinner, who had sworn to an accusation, which, if he did not know to be false, he could not

know to be true, and which he *did* know to have been brought out of malice ; and if reporters spake true, it did blanch the cheek of Sir William de Tracy, when the sublime Gregorian chant burst forth : " Why boastest thou thyself, thou tyrant, that thou canst do mischief ? Whereas the goodness of God endureth yet daily. Thy tongue imagineth mischief, and with lies thou cuttest like a sharp razor. \* \* Therefore shall God destroy thee for ever ; He shall root thee out of the land of the living. The righteous shall see this, and fear, and shall laugh him to scorn." And when, ceasing for a moment, it swelled still more terribly with the imprecations that an ungodly man should be above the deceiver ; that Satan should stand at his right hand ; that in his trial he should be condemned ; that his prayer should be turned into sin ; that his children should be fatherless, his wife a widow : that the extortioner might consume all he had ; that in the next generation his name should be clean put out ; and that, finally, the curse might come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones : and concluded with the prayer, " Help me, O Lord my God ! O save me according to Thy mercy : and they shall know how that this is Thy hand, and that Thou, LORD, hast done it : though they curse, yet bless Thou ! and let them be confounded that rise up against me ! but let Thy servant rejoice."

Then the iron, which was to form the ordeal,



being brought in, the Abbat pronounced over it a benedictory prayer: that the God who had of old time appointed the ashes of a burnt-offering to decide between the guilty and the innocent, would be pleased, of His mercy, to bless those His creatures to the discovery of the truth, so making clear the innocent, and condemning the guilty, that virtue might prevail, calumny be confounded, His holy Church be increased, and His holy Name glorified. The plough-shares were then taken away to be heated in the furnace.

Descending from his throne, the Abbat approached the Holy Doors, and standing at the entrance of the Choir, exhorted each party, if they valued their salvation, as they would not tempt God to His uttermost indignation, as they would leave some place of repentance, as they would not be shunned as a thing polluted in this world, and a portion for the lake of fire and brimstone in the next,—that even now, at the eleventh hour, they would confess the truth; casting themselves upon the mercy of Almighty God, and betaking themselves to the discipline of Holy Church, and thus endeavour to obtain forgiveness in the last day.

It was observed, that although Abbat Odo, assuming the part of an impartial judge, endeavoured to speak equally to both parties, the whole air and manner of his address shewed that he was thinking rather of the accusers than the accused. No apparent impression having been produced by his

words, he next addressed himself to the latter ; and exhorted her to confidence in the wisdom and goodness of the Father of the fatherless, and the Judge of the widows, assuring her that she might well depend on His exerting His power in an extraordinary manner, in a case like this, where His Church appealed to Him as the fountain of Truth, when from human eyes it seemed hidden. Then, causing the crowd to move to the north and south sides of the nave, the Abbat advanced into its eastern portion, followed by the monks from the Choir : the Prior, with some others, and the accused (who, by the strange power that danger sometimes has over a strong mind, seemed transformed from the peasant-woman into the heroine,) retired to the west end, where Eadwith was blindfolded ; one of the knights' retainers examining the bandages to preclude the possibility of any collusion. While the servitor-brethren were bringing in the plough-shares glowing from the furnace, and laying them on the pavement at irregular distances, the anxiety of the assembled crowd was intense ; and many a dark and scowling look was cast on the knights, who evidently, though they would have scorned to own it, felt anxious and uneasy under the publick gaze. A line of monks was then formed on each side of the fiery road : the wooden shoes of Eadwith were taken off, and herself led to its western end : the Abbat advanced to its eastern extremity, and having made the sign of the cross over the burning materials,

bade her, in the name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST, to come to him. On she came, with hesitating steps, threading her perilous way. Twice or thrice the bystanders thought that she had scorched her feet—still she came forward, unharmed—now there are but four more bars—now but three—now but two—now she is free, if only one more step be right—it is taken—and she is in safety! The Abbat, casting his eyes to heaven, and solemnly exclaiming, “THOU hast maintained Thy right, and Thy cause: Thou art set in the Throne that judgest right,” stopped Eadwith, and announced her acquittal. But the change from terror to joy was too much for her, and she fainted at his feet. While the infirmer and some of the by-standers stepped forward to her assistance, the Abbat, turning to the accuser, exclaimed,—“For you, recreant and perjured knights! the shame of chivalry, and disgrace of Christendom, pollute this holy place no longer with your vile presences. GOD hath delivered the poor and oppressed from your blood-thirsty covetousness: His hand is stretched out to save those whom none else would save. Go, miserable traitors! lest the sacredness of the place protect you not: and doubt not that Holy Church will deliver you over to an anathema for this deed.” The interference of the hand of GOD seemed to inspire the old man with a courage above his nature; and although De Tracy twice, with a look of the deadliest hatred,

laid his hand on his misericorde, he and his companion slunk away abashed, and followed by the suppressed curses of that vast assembly. As the porter opened the great gates to them, Reginald Fitz-Urse offered him a piece of money: but the old man crying out, "Thy money perish with thee!" cast it after him.

In the mean time Eadwith had recovered her senses: and the Abbat, after cheering her up, said, "Thy good deeds and hospitality, my daughter, as doubt not they shall be rewarded of God, so they shall not go unrewarded of men. Henceforth shalt thou be the wife of Stigand the FREEMAN: half a hide of land here in Canterbury will I bestow on him, and twelve golden pieces on thee; and that son of thine whom thou didst bring before us shall, if thou art minded to dedicate him to Holy Church, be brought up, at mine own expense, in this house."

Eadwith replied by mingled tears and blessings: and none were there of the assembled multitude who blessed not the munificence of Odo the good Lord Abbat.

## CHAPTER VIII.

MEANWHILE, pursuing their dangerous journey through Kent, the Archbishop and his faithful attendant sought out the most untrodden byeways, carefully avoiding all large towns; and though thus occasionally compelled to trace a circuitous course, steadily and with good courage they held on for Sandwich. At night they rested in some friendly cell, such as were the offshoots of the larger religious houses; sometimes they trusted themselves to a poor Saxon hovel, and once they took shelter in a deserted barn. The more he was surrounded with dangers and harassed with cares, the higher did Thomas of Canterbury rise above them; and comforting himself with the thought of the good confession he was honoured by witnessing on earth, look forward with joy to the rest which remained for him in heaven. Word of complaint never escaped his lips; and even Warel's enthusiasm in

the good cause derived fresh strength, as he saw the vigour and heavenly constancy wherewith the Archbishop supported the trial of his protracted wanderings.

In the mean time, the king and parliament were not idle. They resolved on sending an embassy to the Pope, to endeavour to procure the Primate's deposition: trusting to the influence of the king's name, (more especially in the then divided state of the Church,) to the magnificence of the retinue, and the eloquence and learning of the prelates who were to accompany it, Gilbert, Bishop of London, and Hilary, Bishop of Chichester; the latter esteemed the most eloquent of the whole Episcopal College. Fully aware of the necessity, if possible, of obtaining a prior hearing, all possible expedition was used in forwarding the equipment of the ambassadors from the court of England.

Our tale must now for a moment turn to Sir William de Tracy, who, after his foil in the Abbey of S. Augustine, left his companion Fitz-Urse at a hostellerie, and bent his way with all speed to the Convent of S. Mary. He hoped to reach it before the news of his discomfiture should have become known to its inmates. But, as it happened, the sisters were at Vespers; and, as the trial and its event was bruited abroad the city by the multitude who had been present in the church, Agnes de Tracy had been informed of the whole train of circumstances, before she learnt that her brother was desirous of speaking with her.

"Tell him," she said, "that dearly as I love him, I would rather have seen him on his hearse, than that he should have been guilty of that which I have heard to-day. The father dieth for God in Holy Land; the son accuseth the helpless and poor, and is of God manifestly overthrown. Woe is me therefore ! Yet tell him this, that since so grievously hath he outraged all justice, and so rebelliously presumed against Holy Church, I will not give him sight or hearing till he hath repaired to his utmost the injury he hath done, and hath received absolution for the same."

The message was accordingly delivered, and William de Tracy left the Convent, breathing vengeance against all whom it contained ; and shortly afterwards was on his way, with his retinue, to Dover, intending thence to pass into France.

It was the Feast of S. Martin ; and a more sunny day never verified the adage of the Martinmas summer. The bright waves of the English channel were crested with light, and danced joyfully to the northerly gale which bore onwards two galleys to their destination. The one was gay and glistening to the eye, and freighted with a gallant crew of Earls, Barons, and Knights : a pennon with the royal *Planta-genista* floated from the mast ; on deck was the sweet harmony of wind instruments ; there was the flashing of armour, and the glitter of splendid vests. The tower, raised on the dais of the deck, was covered with silver hangings ; the rude square canvass swelled in the wind ; and the sea foamed

beneath the two banks of oars. The other vessel, an old weather-beaten bark, whose rough sides gave token of many a midnight battle with the channel waves, trusted entirely to her sails: but by her more commodious shape, and by the freight, seemed to hold fair rivalry with the former. Standing near its beaked head were two Benedictine monks, engaged sometimes in converse with each other, sometimes in marking the nearing shores. That vessel carried the bravest defender of England's Church to his appeal. The crew of each ship knew who were borne along in the other: there was no mistaking the royal galley; and the Sandwich vessel in which Becket was crossing, was known by the account which the Commissioners had received of it ere they left Dover. Onwards both vessels bore, towards the fair port of S. Omer; the surf-beaten shore, sunny hills, and green fields of France gleaming brighter and brighter across the waves.

"An he maketh not more speed," said the Earl of Leicester, "the proud Saxon Primate will be arrested as soon as he setteth foot in foreign land. That old hulk traileth but lazily through the water, while our galley glideth along as swiftly as tercel from a lady's hand."

"I would not for a thousand crowns," observed Sir William de Tracy, who, by means of his friendship with the Earl of Leicester, had been allowed to join the Commissioners, and had taken the opportunity of putting the best gloss that he could on his



late discomfiture; "I would not for a thousand crowns that he escapeth us. Let us only tell our own tale to King Louis, and the second comer will scarcely be believed."

"God forbid, my lord," said the hypocritical Foliot to Leicester, "that we should wrest justice in this matter! Our Lady be my witness that I go about this thing with a right heavy and sorrowful heart; and were it not that our lord the King hath straitly charged and commanded my service herein, I had rather have bestowed myself in my own diocese, than have been called off from works of charity and devotion, which God He knoweth we love better than worldly and carnal pursuits."

"Surely, surely, your lordship saith well," answered Hilary of Chichester, glad of an opportunity to shew his learning; "even as S. Ambrose teacheth, *Quod episcopis minime deceat terrenorum appetitus*; that is to say, my lords," he added, turning to the lay-peers, "that the pursuing of secular matters formeth no fit occupation for him that is a Bishop."

"Nevertheless," said De Tracy, "it seemeth to me, under your favour, holy Fathers, that Bishops do engage therein with zeal inferior to none: that ship yonder proveth me that I speak truly. And methinketh that if ye are backward in this business, ye do exert yourselves therein with marvellous great self-denial."

"For therein lieth, my son, the virtue of a

Bishop," returned Gilbert of London. "He that knoweth not how to give up his own will to others, is little meet to be called to that office in the Church."

"Even so testifieth S. Hilary," said the Bishop of Chichester, "in that place where he saith, *Eum autem, qui ad hunc ordinem inscriptus est, vigilem esse et in omnibus sobrium, ipsa natura docet.*"

"In the meanwhile," remarked Robert of Leicestershire, "it seemeth to me that we be fallen somewhat behind our enemy. Sir Captain," he added, addressing that officer, "think you there is any fear lest La Blanche Dâme (so was Becket's vessel named) should reach her port first?"

"It standeth, an it please your lordship," replied the captain, "on the wind. If that remaineth as it is, then do our oars tell, and we shall gain the day; but if it riseth, La Blanche Dâme is the more used to these seas, and is better rigged, and lighter freighted, and I fear me will outstrip us."

"Think you that it will arise?" asked Leicester, anxiously.

"To the best of my poor skill," the captain answered, looking to windward as he spoke, "it will not."

"Marry, all well!" cried the other. "Spare not your best skill, and it shall turn to your profit. My lords," he added, "methinketh the music waxeth tedious. Sir Hugh de Morville, thou usedst to be of much repute in *the joyous science*: I pray you to give us some small essay thereof."

"Marry, and very willingly," said the party addressed; "only I would your lordship had a better minstrel." So saying, Sir Hugh, a young knight of a prepossessing countenance, quick dark eye, fresh colour, and peaked auburn beard, sang in the *Langue d'oc*, a ballad,\* which in English might run thus:

It was the good King Charles of France, and the twelve good  
Knights his band;

And a storm on the sea fell suddenly, as they steered for the  
Holy Land.

Then out and spake Sir Roland: In arms I fear no foe;

But the use of all, I ween is small, when the sea is raging so.

Out spake Sir Holger, a Danish knight: The harp I touch right  
well;

But to tame the sea is too hard for me, and abate the surf and  
swell.

It was the good Sir Oliver, right gloomy was his cheer;

I care not, quo' he, what my lot may be, but I grieve for my  
Albaclere.

Then out and spake Sir Ganelois, but his words no utterance  
found,

With my good will ye might drown your fill, so I were but safe  
and sound.

It was the good Archbishop then, and sorely did he sigh;

Alack, that a band for Holy Land beneath the waves must lie!

I would the fiends that raise the storm, quoth the Count of the  
iron heart,

For the good deeds I've render'd them, would let us hence depart.

O then spake out Sir Ramis stout: The two best things, I wiss,  
Were skill to think, and wine to drink, when winds blow hard  
like this.

It was Riðl, an aged knight: I see, quo' he, the beach;

And on its shores my scattered bones to wind and wave must  
bleach.

\* Imitated from Uhland's *Der K  nig Karl war   ber Meer*.

Out spake Sir Guy, a fair young knight, well skill'd i' th' joyous art :

Had I a tassel-gentle's wings, from this good ship I'd dart.

O would I were, quoth Count Garun, in the halls of my own countrie,

I'd rather quaff the red red wine, than taste the briny sea.

Then out and spake a knight of fame, Sir Lambert was he hight;

'Twere better we should eat the fish than they should o'er us fight.

It was Sir Godfrey then that spake, a valiant knight and tall :

If 'tis hard to me to taste the sea, 'tis just as hard for all.

King Charles sat still, and held the helm, nor word he deigned to say ;

He watch'd the tide, and the storm he eyed, until it passed away.

"Ha, ha!" cried Leicester, "singularly well done of King Charles; and singularly well said of his knights, too, and worthy of a better fate than Roncesvalles. Look!" he continued, "where is La Blanche Dâme now?"

All eyes followed his; and the breeze having slackened during the song, the vessel he named had evidently fallen much behind, and was still losing way. The mirth and clamour on the royal galley grew louder: wine was called for, and the speedy downfall of Thomas of Canterbury was pledged by the laymen; the Churchmen, though declaring their concurrence in the wish, deeming it more decorous to abstain.

Thus, with gaiety and uproar, the vessel which bore the great and mighty of this world, sped on her easy way. Turn we to that which bore the earthly fortunes of the Church.

Becket and Warel, fully aware of the dangers which would beset them if they were outstripped by the royal galley, had enquired of their captain, who knew the dignity of his passengers, his opinion as to the respective fleetness of the rivals ; and had received a similar answer to that given by the other to the Earl of Leicester.

"Leave the event, my son," he said to Warel, "to Him who governeth the winds and the sea. He hath so marvellously preserved us in our perils heretofore, that I doubt me not His hand will still be with us for good." Warel still continued somewhat anxiously to eye the distance to be traversed between themselves and the shore, and calculate mentally the respective speed of the vessels. "If the ethnical poet," added Becket, "could represent the sea-god as pushing forward with his hand them that sacrificed to him, will not the God, Whose we are and Whom we serve, deliver us, who are suffering in His cause, and have called upon His Name?"

"But behold, holy Father, the sail swelleth not as it did ; of a surety it slackeneth. And look, I pray you, at the captain, how he looketh gloomily towards the quarter whence cometh the wind."

"Cease, my son, I pray you," returned the Archbishop, "from these vain surmisings. Of a surety they that be with us are more than they that be with them."

"Thou knowest, holy Father, that I care not for

myself; but it is for thyself and the Church that I fear."

"Fear for the Church?" returned the Archbishop. "That were strange in him that knoweth how, being founded on S. Peter, as on an immovable rock, the gates of hell shall not prevail against Her. And for ourselves, we are ready not only to be bound, but to die for Her. Ask they for our captivity? Willingly will we abide bonds, knowing that we are yet free. Ask they for our blood? We will yield it gladly; knowing that the scars of the martyrs shall turn to ornaments of beauty, so that in all things God be glorified."

The captain of the ship now stepped forward with the intelligence that the wind had so much abated, that he feared the case was hopeless.

"Do thy best, good captain," said the Prelate, "and leave the rest to God." The Archbishop then knelt devoutly, and the Sub-prior followed his example; and as they prayed they heard faint snatches, from the royal galley, of Sir Hugh de Morville's song. But ere they ended, and while the profane health was passing round the gay courtiers, a 'cat's paw' glistened on the waves; and in a few moments the Prelate's vessel, feeling its influence, stooped courteously to the waves and sped along.

And now the two vessels were nearly abreast; and the harbour of Gravelines, with an entrance allowing only one ship to pass at a time, was full in

sight, some quarter of a league before them. The rowers plied their utmost efforts; the courtiers gazed impatiently on the lessening space, or paced anxiously around the tower. The Prelate, fixed on the same spot, stood with his arms folded in a cross on his breast, and looked calmly and trustfully onward. So they sped forward; and the most experienced eye could not pronounce where the victory would be. At length the breeze lulled a little, and the royal galley bore onwards.

"Two golden pieces each to the rowers," cried the Earl of Leicester in exultation, "if they take us in first!"

The Archbishop said in a tone audible only to Warel, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the Name of the LORD of Hosts, the GOD of the armies of Israel, Whom thou hast defied. *O Sancte Martine, ora pro nobis!*"

Again the breeze sprung up behind them; the sails swelled out light and full, and La Blanche Dâme, leaping forwards, outstripped her rival, and entered the narrow jaws of the harbour ere the royal galley had shipped her oars for the passage.

## CHAPTER IX.

AGNES DE TRACY and the Prioress of S. Mary's sat in the apartment usually occupied by the latter. It was not large, and might not altogether have accorded with modern notions of comfort. But it had all that the Superior of the little convent wished; and in good sooth was exactly in keeping with the place. The walls were hung with tapestry, representing various scriptural subjects: the Fall, for example; the Beasts going two and two into the Ark; the Sacrifice of Isaac; and the Sun and Moon standing still at the bidding of Joshua. The ceiling was of vaulted stone; the floor partly covered with mats, and partly strewn with rushes. One of the windows, with its wide splay and narrow slit, looked out into the second court, which was the burying-ground of the sisters, and which was marked by the Cross in the middle, wrought after the fashion of the times in the shape of a



circle on a somewhat pyramidal shaft, and representing our Blessed Saviour (so Catholick sculpture has ever represented Him) as stretching out His arms, and thereby seeming to invite the whole world to Himself. Around it were the thousand devices into which the cross was worked, each marking out where some sister, having departed with the sign of faith, was now resting in the sleep of peace. The other window looked out into the orchard, or hort-yard, as the Prioress might have called it; where the wind was making rude sport with the red leaves which yet hung on the trees. Agnes was engaged on her tapestry; the other sat with a book of devotion.

"Even so," said the Prioress, "my daughter, is the life of man as be these leaves, at the funeral whereof the wind maketh mournful yet pleasant music. But beholdest thou not how, as the branches do clash one against another, of themselves they perforce make the sign of the cross, teaching us thereby in what we be to put our trust. It is a fit day, verily, for the funeral of one like unto our departed sister Margaret, whose soul God pardon."

"Amen!" replied Agnes de Tracy. "I have heard wise men say, my mother, that there may be traced that holy sign in almost every thing that we behold both in nature and in art; and I do partly believe it."

"Surely, my daughter," answered the other, "it is so. The ship, as it glideth by upon the sea, and

the bird, as it cleaveth the air, and the road, as it goeth winding over the moor, and cutteth his neighbour road, and the stars in their silent courses, and the long clouds at evening, all these do set out unto us the figure of the Holy Cross."

"I scarce know how, my mother," said Agnes, "to express unto you the calm and peace of mind that I have felt, since, by our Lady's favour, my abode was thrown into this house. Indeed, right happy I was with my dear father, Sir Ranulph de Broc, on whose soul God have mercy! yet knew I not the holiness and the peacefulness of the evercoming seasons of prayer, and the midnight hymns, and the opening and shutting of the day with the blessing of our heavenly Father, even as do the flowers with the dew of heaven. And I do exceedingly love the greyness and the repose of these old walls, where so many humble souls have been at peace with their God, and whence so many have gone home to Him."

"Thou wouldst make a happy sister, my poor child," said the Abbess, with a mournful smile.

"I fear not," said Agnes, looking down; "I have that which bindeth me far too nearly to the world. Nathless, I do look upon them that have here dedicated their love to Him that deserveth it best, as far happier than I am."

At this moment the bells of the Priory church began to chime; not to toll, for the Church then allowed no such expression of grief for the depar-

ture of one of her children : and the Abbess rising, and speaking as though of the living, said, " Time is it that we do now visit Sister Margaret ;" and followed by Agnes, she proceeded to the hall, where the sisters were already assembled around the remains of their companion. The departed one, now laid in her coffin, still wearing the Benedictine dress and the fair veil, looked like one who had fallen into a sleep deeper and calmer than that of earth : in her hands was placed a cross ; tapers were burning at her head and at her feet ; and ever and anon the sweet voices of the sisters chanted one of the penitential psalms. The procession was soon formed. Two Benedictine priests, in copes of dark purple, went first ; then came the Abbess with her silver staff ; then the nuns, two and two, the bearers of the coffin being in the midst. Arrived at the church, the coffin was set down on its hearse in the nave, the tapers still burning about it. The rest, going into the choir, sang the psalms ; the 116th, with its antiphon, or key-note, " I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living ;" the 120th, with its antiphon, " Woe is me, that I am constrained to dwell in Mesech ;" the 121st, with that verse, " The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil ; yea, it is even He that shall keep thy soul ;" then the 118th ; and afterwards the priests began, " I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me ;" " Blessed," replied the choir, " are the dead which die in the Lord." " From the gates of hell," they continued ; " De-

liver," answered the sisters, "her soul, O LORD!" "Requiescat," chanted the Priests, "in pace. Amen." "Incline," they proceeded, "O LORD, Thine ears to our petitions, wherein we beseech Thy loving-kindness, that Thou wouldst be pleased to give unto the soul of Thy servant Margaret, whom Thou hast removed from this world, a habitation of light and rest; and wouldst grant unto it the company of Thy Saints in Paradise. Amen."

Then the coffin was borne to its long resting-place; at the head of the grave was a banner wrought with the instruments of Crucifixion, imaging the victory that Holy Church hath over the power of death; there was also the silver Cross. And the sorrowing company stood round; and there was Christian hope in every face; and in the citadel of death were scattered on all sides memorials of Him Who by His death hath overcome death; and there were none of the Pagan trappings and hired mourners of modern funerals. Yet were there tears, as the Priest, looking on the lifeless form, and casting earth on the coffin, said "I commend thy soul to GOD the FATHER Almighty, and thy body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life."

The coffin was then lowered into its home: and all kneeling, the Priest continued, "We commend, O LORD, into Thy Hands, the soul of this Thy servant; beseeching Thee, O Saviour of the world,

that to her, for whom Thou didst descend into this world, Thou wouldst give a place in the bosom of Abraham. Acknowledge, O God, a sheep of Thine Own flock, a lamb of Thine Own fold, a sinner of Thine Own redeeming. So that, by the intercession of Thy Blessed Saints and Martyrs, she, being freed from the chains of the flesh, may attain to the glory of Thine eternal kingdom, through the merits of JESUS CHRIST, our LORD. Amen."

After this followed the supplication for the souls of all the departed faithful; and then the terrible *Dies Iræ* burst forth from the Choir; softening in its close to the pathetic petition,

" LORD of Mercy, Jesu blest !  
Grant her Thine eternal rest !"

This was the first funeral that Agnes de Tracy had ever attended; and no marvel if it led her, as she paced slowly up and down the narrow cloisters, to muse deeply on the holy retirement and peace of a life so spent as had been hers whom she had just seen committed to the hallowed earth; and by contrast to look forward to her own, turbulent as it was like to be with wars and civil contention. For Ranulph de Broc had already distinguished himself, though so young, both in the court and in the field; and in those times, when, from the warlike genius of the Plantagenet kings, so different from the mild rule of the descendants of S. Louis, the English Knights and Barons were continually engaged in one strife or another, it was impossible that the wife

of one whose lot among them would be conspicuous, could have other than a lot of many cares and of much worldliness. She looked onwards nevertheless, 'bating not a jot of heart or hope,' expecting the time when Ranulph, full of glory acquired from the Infidel possessors of the Sepulchre, would return to her, and lead such a life as his father had led before him; a life, if not without its trials, not without its joys and comforts; and, above all, not without its means of advancing the glory of God, and the good of His Church.

## CHAPTER X.

ARCHBISHOP BECKET on his arrival at S. Omer, where Hubert the Deacon was awaiting him, betook himself to the Abbey of S. Bertin; and there, in a lonely hermitage, by the advice of the Fathers, lay hid till the English ambassadors had left the town. In a few days they departed to the French Court at Compeigne; where they met with notoriously bad success. Louis, who held correspondence by letter with the Archbishop, on reading the letter addressed to him by Henry, came to the words, *Thomas, late Archbishop*. "*Late Archbishop?*" he said; "who hath deposed him? I am, as your Master is, a king; yet have I not authority to depose, of myself, the meanest clerk in my dominions." On the contrary, Warel and Hubert, who also presented themselves at Compeigne, were received by King Louis in the kindest manner, and received promise of his favour and protection.

It was a fine afternoon towards the end of November, and the tall spires of Sens, where the Pope then resided, were just visible on the horizon, that the English ambassadors journeyed onwards, in the hope that they should obtain a more favourable answer from him than they had received from the French king. The Ecclesiastics on their ambling palfreys, and the Knights on their fiery steeds, maintained such conversation as the somewhat uneasy motion and rugged road would admit.

"Of a truth," said Gilbert Foliot, "an we speed not better here than we have done hitherto, both at S. Omer and at Compeigne, little thanks will his Highness owe us, for the part we have taken herein."

"And little chance, holy Father," answered De Tracy, "would thine be of the pall thou now seekest to wrest from Becket."

"How meanest thou by that?" asked the Bishop angrily. "God be my witness, I never raised thought so high: for so great a burden would be far above my strength. Here is our brother, Hilary of Chichester, who of his marvellous learning and eloquence is well meet to be raised to that dignity and preeminence."

"Nay brother," said Hilary, "some small parts we have been thought to possess, and it hath been said that we have improved them by continual study: and whatever they be, we shall not be slack to use them when we do appear before his Holiness. But



yet little meet we were for such reward as our holy brother of London speaketh of."

"For our own part," continued Gilbert, "it hath ever been known and noted of us, that we have avoided, as much as in us lay, such dignities as we have been called to undergo; and all men may hereby judge how far we should be from seeking further burdens of the same kind."

"Then art thou grievously belied," said De Tracy, "concerning thy translation, holy Father, from Hereford; which men say was not——"

"Silence, Sir William de Tracy!" cried Leicester, unwilling to allow the seeds of discord to be sown among those whom it so much concerned to be unanimous, and to have the most cordially good understanding. "The time, methinks, were better spent in devising how to meet the trial whereunto we be approaching, than in ripping up old grievances, to our small pleasure, and smaller profit."

"Your wisdom, lord Earl," said Hilary, "needeth not to spend itself touching that matter; for I have that which shall move the Pope to listen graciously unto us. For it is pertinently noted of S. Ambrose, *Eloquentia maximam in se vim habet, ad pellicendos hominum animos*: which, in our vernacular, signifieth that eloquence doth marvellously allure and draw unto itself the passions of men. And we have accordingly spent no small time and labour in composing an oration fitted to the place and time, which, with our Lady's grace and your good leave, we shall deliver before him."

"By my troth," said Hugh de Morville, "I never yet, saving your presence, holy Father, did see the good that arose from orations and abundance of words. Better, in my opinion, to tell his Holiness that this Thomas hath transgressed all the laws and usages of this land, and is a spotted and perjured traitor; and that if our Lord and Master cannot at his hand obtain deposition of the Primate, why, he will even depose him for himself."

"God forbid, my lords," said the Bishop of London. "What were this but to abjure the rock of S. Peter, upon which, as on an immoveable foundation and corner-stone, the whole Church standeth? Let us rather do, as our brother of Chichester adviseth; and we doubt not that Christ's Vicar will attend graciously unto our humble and reasonable petitions."

"The Bishops do counsel well," remarked the Earl. "Thou must remember, Sir Hugh, that we be not now in the tilt-yard or in the battle-field; but come as men of peace, and must thereby accordingly compose ourselves."

"Peace or war," said De Tracy, "it is due time, so that that traitor payeth the penalty he deserveth. Lo you! here be two monks bound on the same journey with ourselves: let us of them enquire how much further this same city lieth; for your steed, my Lord of London, which appeareth to me something of the weakest, will hardly hold you out much longer."

"Marry, and he seemeth to me step uneasily," answered Foliot. "*Benedicite!* fair sons: can ye do us to wit how far we be from Sens?"

"Thither, holy Father," said Warel, "we be pilgrims ourselves; but, as we guess, from the brow of the hill we do now climb we shall behold the city."

"Maketh his Holiness sojourn there still?" asked the Earl of Leicester.

"Of a certain, fair Sir, he doth; and there be many Cardinals and Bishops there attendant upon him."

"Be you of this country, my son?" enquired the Bishop of London.

"Of Normandy, holy Father," returned Warel.

"Hear you any news of that banished traitor and sower of sedition, Thomas Becket?" interrogated De Tracy.

"None for certain, fair Sir, save that he bestoweth himself, men say, in this land."

"Know you," asked the Bishop of London, "whether he hath sent any ambassadors on his part to his Holiness the Pope?"

"There be none yet arrived at Sens," replied Warel.

By this time they reached the top of the hill; and glowing in a misty flood of purple glory, the city, towers, monasteries, castle, and bridge lay at their feet. And the vista of the leafless elms which skirted the road thither, nobly ended in such a goal.

"By my troth," exclaimed Hilary, "that which

they say of the Bishop of Banchor meseemeth true of him who holdeth this See : he needeth no other translation save to heaven."

"To which blessed place God vouchsafe to bring us all !" ejaculated Foliot.

"Wilt please your lordships ride ?" asked Leicester. "Day weareth, and meet it were that we present our credentials unto his Holiness this evening."

They rode forward : and then Warel said to Hubert, "Let us follow their example, good brother : and doubt not, that if the Court of France did us so much right, much more shall a higher court than that of any earthly prince."

"Amen," said Hubert ; "I am full of confidence and hope. Our holy Father Thomas even now prayeth for us ; he is with us in spirit, and we will prove ourselves, as beseemeth, fit messengers of so high a cause."

There was high feasting that evening in the Governour's hall at Sens : and amidst pomp and pageantry Henry's ambassadors quaffed the Malvoisie, and drained the huge silver goblets. Even at the hour when their mirth was highest, and their revelry loudest, two monks might have been seen gliding along the narrow passages of the castle, preceded by a seneschal bearing a torch, and ushering them into the private room of the Pope.

Alexander the Third, who then filled the chair of S. Peter, was a man, in whose grey hairs and high

forehead, and cold blue eye, and thin pale face, might well be read his dignity. In company with a Cardinal and his private Secretary, he sat in a small room of our Lady's turret in the castle of Sens, engaged in deep conversation on the miserably divided state of Christendom, when the legates from Archbishop Becket were announced. Hastening forwards, they threw themselves at the feet of Alexander; and Hubert said:

"Holy Father, your son Joseph no longer reigneth in Egypt: but the Egyptians have risen against him, and have sold him for a slave."

"Liveth then your master?" replied the Pope. "He may claim the glory of a martyr, though he be in the flesh." And he burst into tears.

Warel then described the sufferings and dangers and protracted wanderings of the persecuted Archbishop; and concluded by beseeching that the earthly Head of the Church would not disregard one of her members, who had so nobly suffered for her welfare.

"Rest assured," returned Alexander, "that we will never forget those miracles of patience which your Master hath performed. To a Mightier than ourselves, and to a better world than this, must we leave his reward: but of this be certain, that we will execute due vengeance upon those his enemies, unless with all speed they do turn and submit themselves unto him. We bear not the keys of S. Peter in vain; and we will bind them on earth, that they

may be bound in heaven. To-morrow we give audience unto the ambassadors of the King: yourselves shall, if you so please, hear, and so with the greater verity report unto your Master what shall then be said. Meanwhile, tarry in our own abode; and remain certain of the love we bear to your Lord."

Relying on these assurances, the two monks were well contented on the following day to be spectators: and the scene was worthy of the occasion. In the great castle-hall, high and vaulted with stone, with its deep window recesses and large chimney, sat Pope Alexander in his rich episcopal robes; the triple mitre on his head, and the triple crosier held by one of his bishops. Over him was a rich hanging of gold and purple: the carved chair in which he sat rested on a raised dais: and around him stood Cardinals, Archbishops, and Bishops, in their most gorgeous and costly array. In a gallery at one end stood some of the wealthiest citizens and most noted ecclesiastics of the city, and among them Warel and Hubert found a convenient position.

Then, in due order, coped bishops and mailed knights were ushered into the presence; and all made the lowest obeisance as they came before him, from whom there was no earthly appeal. Alexander but slightly noticed their acknowledgements; but, when they stood in order, motioned to

Gilbert de Foliot, who was placed foremost, to speak.

"Most holy Father," said he in Latin, "and you, holy Fathers, in whose presence I stand, it is not without fear and trembling that I approach your venerable judgment-seat. But when I remember for whom I come, for a prince whose love to Holy Church hath no equal among crowned heads; and against whom, a stirrer-up of sedition, a perjured man and a traitor——"

"My son," interrupted the Pope, "to such words we may not listen. We will pray you peace."

Gilbert de Foliot stepped back in consternation, leaving his place to Hilary. The knights, who comprehended little of what had happened, but saw from Alexander's countenance that he was deeply offended, looked at each other in astonishment.

"Marry," said Leicester to Morville, "an this be our churchman's speed, we are badly sped."

"And, I fear me," replied the other, "he of Chichester will advantage us little. Look how he pranketh himself to speak!"

Hilary did indeed advance with great confidence; for his oration had cost him many a weary hour, and he flattered himself that it would greatly advantage his party.

"Sanctissime et Beatissime Pater, vosque, reve-

rendi admodum Patres, nos quidem, indignissimos regis Angliæ ministros, oportuebat——”

The bishops who surrounded the Papal chair, and who were many of them deeply learned, and all fully aware of the solecism which Hilary had uttered, burst into a laugh; and Alexander himself said to the Cardinal who stood next to him,

“Marvellous great lack of learning must these English have, when these be the Prelates whom they choose to such an embassy. *Oportuebat* indeed! An a clerk had the virtue of an angel, and no better learning than this, Prelate he were none for us.”

Hilary stepped back in as great confusion as his brother of London had done, to the still greater surprise of the knights, who could not imagine what, in an address commenced with such gravity, could have excited the ridicule of the auditors.

“An it cometh to thee, Lord Earl, to speak,” said Hugh de Morville, “our Lady speed thee better than our holy Fathers here!”

“Marry, and I fear it must be my lot,” returned the Earl of Leicester. And perceiving that neither of the Prelates in question were disposed to recommence their addresses, he stepped forward, and said reverently enough, but with a blunt kind of grace, in Norman French,

“Most holy Father, seeing these holy Prelates have, I wot not how, been so unhappy as not to



find favour in your eyes, much do I fear me, lest I, who am no clerk, and not skilled either to speak or to understand the Latin tongue, should fare yet worse. Nevertheless, my master's honour so requiring, I will essay, in few words, to set forth the cause which hath brought us before your Holiness at this present time. It is not unknown to your Holiness that the King, my master, did of late, for the reducing of his kingdom to the better order, devise certain constitutions, to which he required all his Peers, as well temporal as spiritual, to make oath that they would obey. With others came Thomas Archbishop of Canterbury to Clarendon, where the council of the nation was assembled; and in manner prescribed made oath that he would steadfastly keep and be governed by the same. Nevertheless, shortly afterwards he changed his mind, and did utterly abjure what he had then done; and being summoned before our Lord the King, refused to appear; and being charged at Northampton to give account of certain money he had received of the King while he was Chancellor, refused to obey, saying, that when he was made Primate, from all such worldly cares was he made free; and being charged not to go out of England, he, nevertheless, secretly departed by night. Which things considered, our Lord and Master judgeth it most meet by our mouths to beseech with all humility your Holiness, to whom be put in trust the keys of

S. Peter, that you will be pleased to put out of his See, and all its dignities and possessions, the afore-said Thomas; and our Lord will be well content that your Holiness shall, of your own free will, appoint unto him a successor in that office."

So saying, the Earl of Leicester stepped back among his friends.

"O' my word," said Sir Hugh de Morville, "your Lordship hath spoken marvellous well, and passing the Bishops exceedingly. Our Lady move his Holiness to regard our cause graciously!"

"My son," said Alexander, "little justice there were in judging a matter until the accused as well as the accusers be present. Wherefore, notwithstanding the great love we bear unto your Master, we must perforce suspend our decree, till our son of Canterbury, whom we no less love, shall have answered for himself to all those your weighty charges and allegations."

"Most holy Father," returned the Earl, "we were expressly commanded by the King our Lord, that we should obtain for him a definitive answer, or tarry for none; therefore, we pray your Holiness to judge the cause betwixt us and the Archbishop at once."

"My son," returned the Pope, "reason willesh that we should tarry for the Primate. The chair of S. Peter hath ever distributed justice with equal balance; and we may not, to agrace an earthly

monarch, do violence unto one that is the minister of a Greater than he."

To this decision, in spite of the repeated solicitations of the English ambassadors, the Pope resolutely adhered, and they were in consequence obliged to return home with an unfavourable account of their long and wearisome journey.

BOOK II.

**S. Thomas a Martyr.**

IMMOLATI VIR BEATUS  
AGNI CARNE SAGINATUS,  
ET PRÆSENTI ROBORATUS  
AD CERTAMEN NUMINE,  
QUAM SERMONE PRÆDICAVIT,  
MILLE SIGNIS QUAM PROBAVIT,  
HANC FIRMARE FESTINAVIT  
FUSO FIDEM SANGUINE.  
PRODIT MARTYR CONFLICTURUS,  
SUB SECURI STAT SECURUS,  
FERIT LICTOR,  
SICQUE VICTOR  
CONSUMMATUR GLADIO.  
TAM PRÆCLARA PASSIO  
REFLEAT NOS GAUDIO.

## CHAPTER I.

Six years have elapsed since the struggle which we are recording between the Church and the Power of this world first commenced. And still it continues undecided. We leave it to the historian to relate its weary progress. It is on record, how, shortly after the interview related in the last chapter, Thomas of Canterbury pleaded his own cause before the Pope; how the Constitutions of Clarendon were read; how the whole assembly, as one man, declared that the cause of the Archbishop was the cause of the Church; and how the illustrious confessor took up his abode in the Cistercian Abbey of Pontigni. He also must relate, that on the return of the ambassadors the estates of the Archbishop and his followers were confiscated; that his friends and relations, to the number of four hundred, were banished; that an oath was first taken of them that they would present them-

selves before the Primate, if so be that his resolution might be moved; that the spectacle of so many sufferers produced a very contrary effect; and that the Bishops and Nobles of France execrated the tyranny of the persecutor. The historian also must relate the interview between the Kings of France and England at Gisors; the resolution of the latter to maintain, the perseverance of the Primate in refusing, the Constitutions of Clarendon; the excommunication of the Bishop of Salisbury, Richard de Lucy, Chief Justiciary, Hugh de S. Clare, Thomas Fitz-Bernard, and others, for allowing or assisting in the appropriation of the goods belonging to the Church of Canterbury; the determination of the Archbishop to excommunicate King Henry; the council called in consequence by that Prince at Chinon; the agitation and tears in which he opened it; the new embassy to the Pope; the legatine commission obtained by the Archbishop; the sudden and unfavourable turn his affairs took at the Court of Rome, in consequence of Alexander's fear lest Henry should acknowledge the antipope; the remonstrances of the King of France; the various unavailing efforts for reconciliation; Archbishop Becket's invincible firmness; the excommunication of the Bishop of London; Henry's project of crowning his son by the hands of the Archbishop of York, to the infraction of the privileges of the Church of Canterbury; Becket's fruitless opposition; and we shall take up our tale with the

return of King Henry from England, after the accomplishment of his favourite project, and in the summer of 1170.

It may well befit the infidel or the schismatical historian to call the firmness and resolution of the Primate, obstinacy and arrogance ; to speak of his censures as the effect of rage, and term his prudence, cunning : true Churchmen will take another view of the matter. If ever Confessor had inducements to quit the cause to which he had pledged himself, if ever Bishop was encircled by weak friends and strong enemies, beset with ensnaring proposals and flattering words, and if ever servant of God by patient continuance in well-doing triumphed over all, then was Thomas of Canterbury that Bishop and Confessor. Let us not be deceived by the representations of writers like Hume, who could not, if they would, judge of such a case ; let us rather hear the sufferer for himself. And take a letter written in 1166, on the receipt of one from the Bishops of his Province, filled with the bitterest taunts and accusations. Surely, if ever, the temper of the writer would now show itself. Thus it begins :

“ Thomas, by the Grace of God, the humble servant of the Church of Canterbury, to all them that by the Grace of God be Bishops of the said Province (if indeed all have written to him), health : and that conduct which they have not yet shewn.

“ The letter of your brotherlinesses (which yet we can hardly believe to have proceeded from your



common wisdom) we have of late unexpectedly received; the contents whereof savour rather of taunts than of comfort. And would that it had rather been sent from the study of piety, and the affection of charity, than of will-worship. For charity seeketh not that which is her own, but that which is JESUS CHRIST'S. It was the duty of your office, if it hath (as it hath) the purity of the Gospel, that if we rightly perform His duties, and ye rightly represent His Person Whose office ye have undertaken, rather ye ought to fear Him Who can cast both body and soul into hell, than him who can slay the body, and after that hath no more that he can do; rather to obey God than men, your Father than your sovereign: by His example Who was obedient to His Father, even unto death. Now He died for us, leaving us a pattern that we should follow His steps. Let us therefore die with Him. Let us lay down our lives, if so be that we may deliver from the yoke of slavery and the tribulation of the oppressor, the Church which He hath founded and set at liberty by His own blood: lest, if we do otherwise, we incur that reprehension in the Gospel, 'Whoso loveth his own life more than Me is not worthy of Me.' Ye ought to know right well, that the commands of the King, so long as he exhorteth to that which is just, must be obeyed; if otherwise he enjoineth, answer, We ought to obey God rather than man. One thing will I tell you—your forgiveness do I crave for giving utterance unto it—that I have

long time held my peace, waiting, if perchance the LORD would inspire you with strength, who turned back in the day of battle; if one only of you would ascend the breach, and oppose himself to the enemy for the house of Israel; or would even feign to join battle with them that daily blaspheme the Host of the LORD;—I kept silence, and none mounted the breach; I held my peace, and none opposed; I waited, and there was none that spake. I dissembled my sorrow; and there was none that even feigned to go down to the battle. Now I have nought left but complaints, and may well cry out, Arise, O LORD, judge Thine Own cause. Vindicate the cause of Thy Church which is rent in pieces, and lieth at the feet of her spoilers. The presumption of them that hate Thee increaseth more and more; there is none among them that doeth good, no, not one. I would, beloved brothers, that there were in you that zeal for the defence of the Church's liberty, that appeareth in those your letters of (as we think scarcely legitimate) appeal, for its confusion. But she is founded on a sure rock; whom none can overthrow, albeit they may shake her. Wherefore then seek ye to put me to shame? yea rather to shame yourselves in my attack? yea rather to confound yourselves together with me, a man who have taken on myself the whole peril, sustained so many revilings, borne so many injuries, undergone exile for the sake of you all? Expedient was it that one should be afflicted for the Church, if even so it might

be freed from slavery. Consider, I pray you, with an honest heart, this thing : ponder the matter : diligently attend what must be the end of these proceedings, so that, laying aside the majesty of the King, and the respect of persons, which God accepteth not, He Himself may cause you to understand what it is that ye are doing, and that which ye intend to do. He remove the veil from your hearts, that ye may know what ye ought to do. Tell me, he of you that knoweth, whose ox, or whose ass, or whose money have I taken since my advancement? Tell me, if I have wrongfully judged the cause of any, or by the loss of any man made a gain to myself? If the case be so, I restore it fourfold. But if in nothing I have offended, why do ye leave me to contend alone on God's behalf? Why do ye dare to oppose yourselves to yourselves in a cause than which none toucheth the Church more nearly? Do not, my brethren—do not, I pray you, as far as in you lieth, confound both yourselves and the Church of God. But turn ye, saith the LORD, unto Me, and ye shall be saved : I desire not the death of a sinner, but that he should be converted and live. Stand with me, my brethren, in this battle ; lay hold on shield and buckler, and come forth to my aid. Gird yourselves with the sword of God Most Mighty ; that we may be able with one mind to resist more valiantly and courageously, as our duty calleth us, the evil-doers, and them that work iniquity, and them that seek to take away the

life of the Church, which is her liberty ; and those who say, Let us take to ourselves the Houses of God in possession. Let us give all diligence therefore, lest anger come down upon us as upon negligent and idle shepherds ; lest we be found dumb dogs, that cannot bark ; lest it be said of us by them that pass by, From the elders of Babylon iniquity is come forth. If in very deed ye will hear me, know ye that the LORD will be with you, and with all of us, who strive by all means to attain peace, and to defend the liberty of the Church. But if otherwise, GOD judge betwixt me and you, and require the confusion of the Church at your hands ; which of necessity, whether the world willeth or not, must stand firm in the word of the LORD wherein it is founded, until its hour is come that it shall depart out of this world unto the FATHER. He judge between us, in that ye have left me alone in this conflict : nor is there one of my friends who will go up with me unto this battle ; nor is there one of you who so much as thinketh or sayeth, Woe to him that is alone ! for who shall raise him up if he falleth ? But this hope is laid up in my bosom, that he is not alone with whom the LORD is, for the LORD supporteth him with His Hand."

Such was the strain in which Archbishop Becket began his reply to the angry taunts of his cowardly Prelates. Let us see now the view which was taken of his exile by those of his friends who yet remained in their native country. Thus writes Peter Bles-

sis, Archdeacon of Bath, to John of Salisbury, one of the Primate's most zealous friends.

"As often as I regard with diligence the common afflictions of the Anglican Church, and the exile of your Lord, Thomas of Canterbury, much consolation cometh unto me from the thought that it is for the justice of God and the liberty of the Church that he opposeth himself as a wall; and that from this persecution he will merit a glorious recompense. I see that ye are placed betwixt the anvil and the hammer; and that sinners continually redouble their blows upon you. But if ye fight in CHRIST and for CHRIST, He will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape. And the LORD will remove the rod of the wicked from the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto wickedness. As the truth cannot lie, so shall the end of your persecutions be a beatitude interminable. Blessed, saith CHRIST, are they that suffer for righteousness' sake. Saith Peter the Apostle, Let none of you suffer as a thief or a murderer, or a busy body in other men's matters. For not the pain, but the cause, maketh the Martyr; as saith the same Apostle, But, if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye. The gift of GOD is it, and His best gift, to suffer contumely for CHRIST. To you, saith the Apostle, it is given on the behalf of CHRIST not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake."

And how warmly attached to him were the friends of the Primate, let the following brief letter from Petrus Cellensis speak :

“ We were right heartily consoled by the consolation of your Holiness, so full of affection, so pious, so full of sweetness and love. The HOLY GHOST the Paraclete return unto you your own consolation, because you have so pitifully looked upon our desolation. The receipt of your letters revived our heart, not indeed dead, but languishing to the death. To our lords and to our friends we return your lovingkindness and consolation ; and in the hope and design of being grateful to them, we send the relics which you desired. Receive them : and since they have no place where to betake themselves, let them be safe under your protection. We commend our brothers and messengers to the discretion of your Holiness. Count yourself as our lord and brother, and fellow-sharer in the prayers of us all. Farewell.”

There seems to have been a presentiment on the part of both Archbishop Becket himself, and of his followers, that his glory would not be limited by confession alone. In his letter to the English Bishops he hints at something of the kind ; and the impression appears to have grown stronger and stronger, till the time of its fulfilment approached. In the view of this termination to his career, the piety and devotion of the little band, first in Pontigni, and then (when Henry II. threatened to expel

the Cistercians from his kingdom if he were any longer sheltered there,) at Sens, were the admiration of the religious of France. The Archbishop passed much of his time in private devotion; and Warel and Hubert, (who afterwards filled the Archiepiscopal Chair of Beneventum,) with John of Salisbury and his other adherents, attended diligently the Hours, officiated in the Mass, gave such tidings of consolation as the times afforded to their persecuted friends in England, and occasionally listened to and assisted in the memoirs which Hubert de Hoschan was drawing up, and which have come down to us as a faithful history of his patron. From his protracted trials the mind of the Prelate came forth like refined silver; and perchance, without losing any of the firmness, it lost some of the hastiness which had been an occasional cause of triumph to his enemies.

The six years which have elapsed since we last saw Agnes de Tracy, had affected her but little. Ranulph de Broc had long been detained in Holy Land, by various expeditions, by a long captivity, and at last by contrary winds and difficult passages. But now, having arrived in Normandy, he sent forward a squire with the intelligence of his safe return, and speedy approach to claim the hand of his mistress. In the meantime, ignorant of the events which had occurred since his departure, and having unfortunately been thrown into the company of Sir William de Tracy and Sir Reginald Fitz-Urse, he

was led to imbibe the most preposterous ideas on the subject of the Archbishop's character; and was the more confirmed in them by De Tracy's assertion that his sister held with respect to it the same views as himself. Agnes, on the other hand, had imbibed from the Prioress of S. Mary's, and from her occasional intercourse with Abbat Odo, the highest veneration and esteem for the noble-minded Primate; and neither the gentle exhortations of the Abbat, who loved her as a child, nor the sharper rebukes of her own superior, could restrain her from breaking out into expressions of passionate indignation at the confiscation of the goods of the Church of Canterbury; and at the mean contrivance whereby Henry prevented the importation of any message of excommunication from the Archbishop, by shutting up all the ports, and making it death to any who should presume to be the bearer of such a message.

Abbat Odo, except that a few more white hairs escaped from his mitre, was little altered; and Eadbald had won the affections of all the monks, and was spoken of as his successor. The church of the Abbey had been some years previously burnt down: but the Abbat and Prior, aided by the skill and wealth of the brethren, had succeeded in completing the greater part of another, which it was hoped would receive consecration at the hands of the Archbishop as soon as he should return.



And with this hasty sketch of the position of its principal characters, we recommence our tale in July, 1170.

## CHAPTER II.

It was on the Feast of S. Mary Magdalene, 1170, that High Mass having been said in the Abbey of S. Giles near Fretville, the Archbishop, Warel, and Hubert found themselves alone in the Sacristy. The Primate was disrobing : and as he did so, he addressed occasional observations to his followers.

"This is a different day, my son," said he, "from that on which we prepared to meet the King at Northampton. That was a day of sorrow and rebuke and blasphemy : then went we to plead the Church's cause as a criminal; now go we to be reconciled to her chief oppressor, and that without concession on our part : God's Name therefore be praised !"

"Of a truth, holy Father," replied Warel, "he that then went forth weeping, and bearing precious seed, hath now come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him."

"Yea," continued Hubert, "heaviness hath endured for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

"This is the LORD's doing," said Becket, solemnly, "and it is marvellous in our eyes. I thought not that GOD would have preserved me to see the day that should restore to me the friendship of my royal Lord, whom I have never ceased to love; and should give me the hopes of again offering the venerable Sacrifice in our beloved Cathedral church of Canterbury. That the confiscations should be refunded, and the banished restored, and the power of the keys given into our hands whole as we received it from GOD, seemeth to me almost beyond belief now that it is come to pass, and assuredly beyond hope before it came."

"And the season of the year both at Northampton and here, seemeth to agree with our own hearts," remarked Warel. "Then was it a dreary autumn, and a long winter was there to be gone through; now summer is at her brightest, as our joy at its highest."

"Whether it will please GOD to continue us for a long or a short time in the service of the Church," said the Primate, "we cannot tell: but this of a surety we know, that whether it be long or short, we shall never forget your love and devotion and fidelity towards us; for, in suffering all things, ye have seemed as though ye suffered nothing. And GOD's benison be on you therefore, now and for ever!"

The monks knelt as their Bishop spoke ; and then kissed the jewelled hand which he extended to them. And thus the champions of the Church came forward to her victory.

With far other feelings the King's followers hailed that bright morning. Now, after all their threats of vengeance and declarations of contempt, to be forced to bend the knee to their great enemy was sorely galling to their pride ; but, besides this, they knew that there was a heavy reckoning to pay. From their tents on the edge of the broad meadow, they witnessed the gathering of the vast assembly, that flocked together to the reconciliation of the King and the Archbishop. Far across it rose the white tents of the French nobility ; and the pennon with the holy fleurs-de-lys marked that tenanted by the Sovereign. A certain space was railed off in the centre, and the barriers guarded by knights and yeomen. Merchants, artificers, clowns, friars, priests, and all kind of the rabble crowded round the enclosure ; and galleries were erected on one side for the reception of the wives and daughters of the nobility. Sir William de Tracy and Sir Ranulph de Broc, to whom the charge of marshals had been given, rode slowly up and down the green within the barriers.

"God's malison on these clowns!" said De Tracy : "what do they here gaping on us? Did they never see a shaven priest afore? for that is all they be like to see this day: save that he shall ride with

some little more pride than ordinary ; and that, our Lady knoweth, is enough."

"Nay now, sir Knight," replied Sir Ranulph, "grudge not the people their enjoyment, such as it is. Marry, an we were in luck, right willing would you be to have so many witnesses of our triumph. His to-day, ours to-morrow, quoth the proverb."

"One might think," said the other, provoked at his companion's good humour, "that thou didst enjoy this disgrace! Keep back, sirrahs!" he continued to the people who pressed on the palings.

"Can your Lordships tell me now," quoth a fool, who had found his way thither, and with his cap and bells was affording no small amusement to the people ; "can your Lordships tell me now, why the elder of you is like an oyster?"

Sir William de Tracy bestowed a curse on the poor fool, and rode on ; Sir Ranulph reined in his horse, and laughed as he answered, "Not I, good fool. Expound unto me, I pray you."

"Why," answered the jester, "he that hath ridden on seldom enough bestoweth his words on the like of us, till he be come unto the furnace of affliction ; even as the oyster openeth not his mouth till he be put into the fire."

"Gramercy, fool!" said the Knight, throwing him a piece of money, and riding on. "Come, Sir William," he continued, "cheer up thy countenance, man! Come, laugh at what thou canst not help."

"Thou hatest not this man as I do," said the other, "or thou couldst not thus make merry with this shame."

"Marry, I hate him infinitely," replied the other; "more from thy teaching than his merits. But lo! here cometh the procession."

A burst of military music on the English side, answered by a similar flourish on the French, commanded the attention of all. A band of Barons and Knights rode forward on each side to the gates of the enclosure; which having been thrown open, from the one the King of England, from the other the Archbishop, both on horseback, advanced.

The King, now somewhat advanced in years, sat his steed with great grace, and behaved full royally. But it was the thought of the multitude that the Prelate looked even more kingly than he. The latter rode forward slowly; the former, putting spurs to his horse, galloped to meet him. The King seemed to speak first, as he took the Archbishop by the hand; and after a little conversation, in which Becket appeared to support the greater share, the latter dismounted, and would have thrown himself at his monarch's feet. But in this he was prevented by Henry, who stooped from his horse so low, as to hold the stirrup while the Prelate remounted. Then the Archbishop of Sens read the articles agreed on, in form following:

"We, Henry, by the Grace of God, King of England, Lord of Ireland, Normandy, Aquitaine,

and Anjou, do for the love of God, of his Holiness Alexander, Pope, and of the Holy Roman Church, grant our Royal leave to our well-beloved Thomas, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of all England, and Metropolitan, to return unto his church of Canterbury, it to have and to hold together with all possessions that he held before he departed from England. He granteth the same likewise to all men that on his account were exiles."

Thus, by the patience and resolution of the Archbishop, the obnoxious institutions of Clarendon were at once and for ever abolished, and things in the English Church returned to the same course as before their promulgation. The exiles were introduced, and well received by the King: and the splendid pageant was over.

After the banquet in the royal tent had ended, and Sir Ranulph had obtained the royal licence to depart unto England, to solemnize his marriage with Agnes, Sir William de Tracy said:

"Sir Ranulph de Broc, an it standeth with your leisure, I would speak unto you, ere we depart for England, on a matter of some moment.

"I am at your service," said the other: "and with so fair a moon above us, and so fair a meadow before us, it were little hardship, methinks, to pass the night in talk."

"It is not unknown to you," proceeded Sir William, "that when the goods of the church of Canterbury were confiscated, they were granted by

his Highness, as unto many others, so more especially unto those whose lands lay adjacent to the city. Among these your uncle, Sir Robert de Broc, did, by request of the King, obtain two hides of land to be added to your domains, he therein acting as guardian of your possessions during your absence in Holy Land. For those lands he paid a price to the King, under their real worth indeed, but such as he would not willingly lose. Now, report goeth that all lands so obtained from Canterbury must now be returned; for such is the will of our new king, the Archbishop; who groundeth himself on a certain musty proverb, 'Once the Church's, always the Church's.' An this be so, either he or thou must lose this money: for to reclaim it from the King were impossible; and even to mention it unto him were a sure way to lose his royal favour. He, therefore, willeth you by me to resist the Archbishop to the uttermost; and never to yield up those lands, whensoever, or wheresoever, or by whomsoever, claimed."

"Right willing am I," said Sir Ranulph, "to yield so reasonable a promise. Something too much of this Prelate's arrogance have we had already. I marked how he did as an equal meet the King to-day; and it shall not be my fault if further reverence he hath paid him."

"Surely," returned the other, "there were small need of that; and from one of your known courage it were even less seeming than from others. He



that hath overthrown knights in the field should hardly yield to priests in the cloister."

"Marry, the land is my own," replied his friend; "it was fairly sold, and fairly bought. It were not meet that my uncle should lose the money for it paid, nor will I myself: if the Archbishop grieveth for the loss of his Church, let him make it good."

"I will no longer then detain you," observed Sir William; "we must be stirring with the lark to-morrow." Sir Ranulph de Broc passed into his tent; and he continued, "Now have I this woodcock in my snare. An he denieth this land to Becket, the proud churchman will deem little of excommunicating him; that depriveth him, for so long as the censure holdeth, of my sister's hand; and who knoweth how we may then work upon him to fall in with us this matter concerning? But yet there lacketh time to digest the purpose."

While Sir William de Tracy thus gave vent to his hatred of the Archbishop, the latter was seated with John of Salisbury, Warel, and Hubert, in the room appropriated to his use within the monastery of S. Giles. Three parchments lay on the massy oaken table; and the Archbishop set his name and episcopal seal to each in turn.

"Now, son John," he exclaimed, "these, as thou knowest, be the excommunications of our brothers of London and Salisbury, and this the deposition of Roger of York, for the marvellous ill part he played touching the coronation of the young King.

Thou mayest not delay in carrying them over into England; for it concerneth us much that they be published with the utmost convenient speed. We do live in dread that some accident, of us unforeseen, should prevent their so necessary effect; for which cause we will not tarry for them till we be able to cross ourselves. They will be published in our Cathedral church of Canterbury by the Abbat of S. Augustine's and thyself, as soon after thy arrival in England as may well be. And our will is, that thou dost at the same time notify to all men concerned therein, that within a month thenceafter ensuing, thou wilt, acting under our authority (unless we in our person should before that time be present), further excommunicate all such as shall have any lands, goods, chattels, or appurtenances whatsoever, of our aforesaid Cathedral church, unless he or they, the said offenders, shall first, by application personally made, pray for a delay of the sentence, promising that they will, with the most speed that in them lieth, restore the said sacrilegiously acquired spoil. And here is a writ, of that tenor, subscribed with our name, and sealed with our seal, the names only being left blank, to be published by the Abbat and thyself, as aforesaid, at the expiration of the said time."

"Of a surety, holy Father," replied John of Salisbury, "your commands shall be performed. But might it not be well (and I pray your Fatherliness's forgiveness if I herein err), that some delay

or leniency were used in this matter? Many strong enemies hath your Holiness in England; few friends, and they weak; and much danger may there accrue, not only to yourself (for that your Fatherliness regardeth not), but also to the Church, if matters be overturned."

"My son," answered Archbishop Becket, "it hath never been our use to look at that which worldly and carnal men might deem profitable and expedient to the Church: through this we have ever passed, and considered what in itself was just and right. And so we shall do now. It is fitting that these men, who have become tools unto the civil power, being like machines in its hands, and forgetting their high calling and their most sacred office, have stooped to render, indeed, the things that are Cæsar's unto Cæsar, but to refuse unto God, through fear of Cæsar, the things that be God's: it is fitting, we say, that such men, who cannot be led by love, but must be driven by fear, should feel the temporal power of the Church, whose spiritual authority they have so contemned."

"Yet were there, holy Father, one more thought which I would willingly urge on your Fatherliness, if I might have permission so to do."

"We give thee leave, my son," said the Primate: "speak boldly."

"I fear then lest your Holiness should herein give great occasion unto the Church's enemies to blaspheme: I know how they will say that such

haste proceedeth not of your pastoral care for the Church committed unto your charge, as we, who know your Fatherliness, know also that it doth; but is the effect of revenge, and springeth of ungoverned passion."

"Nay," answered Becket, "an they say so, the sin of their false judgment resteth on their head: we are guiltless. For us, it is a very small thing that we should be judged of men: the rather that the time of our departure draweth so nigh."

The monks looked one on another, as if to make certain whether they had heard the last words aright: at last Warel asked—

"How meaneth your Holiness? Your departure unto England?"

"To a better place, we trust, than England," replied the Confessor; "and be not surprised at this saying. For these four years past it hath been a presentiment that I should be accounted worthy of the crown of martyrdom. At the first, I dared not to yield myself unto so bright a hope; for I remembered that my grievous sin at Clarendon, and was troubled. But both in dreams of the night, and thoughts of the day, it hath visited me and dwelt with me: but never so strongly as this morning afore I met the King; and what did then happen was, as it were, a sure and a near presage of its truth."

"I understand not," said Hubert, "what it is that your Holiness pointeth at."

"All other things," said Becket, "were well ordered and carried betwixt us; but the kiss of peace he constantly refused to give; thereby shewing the hollowness of all. And that on so poor an excuse!"

"What excuse then alleged he, holy Father?" asked Warel.

"He said, that in his own kingdom he would bestow it right willingly; but that here in France less convenient were it. And now, my sons, what mean ye to weep and to break my heart? What so glorious an end, an ye of a truth love me, could ye wish for your master? What so everlasting a memory in the Church? Lo! here we have suffered miseries compared unto which death were happiness; and why should ye who have borne the greater evil tremble at the lesser? In the mean time we commend ourselves unto your hearty prayers."

With such words the Primate endeavoured to inspirit his followers. And when they left him to pass the night in tears, he sank into a sleep as easy as that of an infant.

### CHAPTER III.

"AND now, mine own Agnes," said Sir Ranulph de Broc, as, some six weeks after the date of the last conversation, he strolled with her in the *pleasance* of Sir Robert de Aymer, a brother-in-arms of her father, at whose castle she was making her abode previously to her marriage, "there cometh but one more sunset between me and mine happiness. How slowly he seemeth to go down behind those elms and the tall tower of the cathedral in the distance, as though he lingered his longest this fair evening over the earth."

"In sooth," said Agnes, "to me he seemeth to sink faster than when you were yet in Holy Land. How often have I shaped me out of those golden clouds that hover around his path, the Holy City with her golden domes and minarets, and the City of David, and the Mount of Olives, and the Holy Sepulchre, and the Pool of Siloam. And I

have wept for very desire that I could take unto me a dove's wings, and worship on that blessed hill, whereon our Atonement was made. And ere my fancies have resolved themselves into air, the moon hath come out, and the cold wind hath arisen, and instead of the vines and olives of that fair region, there was the refectory looking down on me with its cold eyes, and the church that in the uncertain light seemed even more solemn than by day."

"And thinkest thou not, my Agnes, that from my prison on Mount Lebanon, I too did watch all the sweet changes of nature, so far as they might be visible unto me in my grated cell. I know indeed that wise men tell us that the sun, when he riseth here in England, is at Holy Land in bright mid-day: the which, however, I something misdoubt; since else some change in the time of his rising and setting we must have seen as we sailed thither. But such neither saw we ourselves, neither can I hear of any that did at any time see it. But how that matter be soever, it was my wont to picture to myself in the burning noondays there, such walk and such converse in the pleasant evening as this; and now that it is come, what happiness did ever equal mine?"

"There is but one thing, Ranulph, that throweth any cloud over the future. It toucheth that land whereof you have told me, which hath come to you from the confiscations at Canterbury."

"Nay now, my fair Agnes, trouble not yourself

with so very a trifle. That land is my own; and if the proud Prelate thinketh to frighten me to surrender it up unto him, he deceiveth himself mightily, and his followers."

"An you knew the proud Prelate, as you term him, you would learn that pride for himself hath he none. His care is for the Church: he dareth not to leave her poorer than he received her, knowing that her wealth will be required at his hands. To her was he wedded when the episcopal ring was put on his finger: to her he hath sworn to be faithful. What wouldst thou think of thyself, Ranulph, an I were thine, as I shortly shall be, if thou wert to impoverish my estates and give away my broad lands, and leave me in want? And how much heavier therefore is his sin, who having the heavenly Bride given into his charge, leaveth her forlorn, and yieldeth her up unto her enemies?"

"Nay, an the case were so," said Sir Ranulph de Broc, "marvellous great injustice have I done this man. But thou deceivest thyself, Agnes, thou deceivest thyself. I myself have seen his arrogance, when at Fretville he came forwards to meet our gracious Lord as if he owned not any peer upon earth."

"I marvel," said Agnes in return, "that thou dost not see how much of thine own chivalry there is in his nature. When thou didst at the passage-of-arms at Sens keep the field against all comers in honour of thy lady-love, who charged thee then



with pride and insolence in so setting forth thine own prowess? Nay, an thou hadst been overthrown (as our Lady be praised thou wert not), who, thinkest thou, would have thrown thy pride in thy teeth? If this thou didst for an earthly glory and an earthly love, how much the rather may he that hath his eye fixed on heavenly renown, and his heart set on a love that shall last for ever, come forward in the championship of the truth unabashed and unterrified? and, knowing that the mightiest kings are but as dust in the balance in His sight Whom he serveth, come before them as befitteth the minister of Him that is the King of kings and Lord of lords?"

"Thou wilt make me, mine Agnes, to love this man in despite of mine own self. But of a surety he hoardeth up money; and they say he hath already untold heaps of treasure; and what noble mind ever hoarded up miserable pelf, which is made to be consumed?"

"Assuredly," returned Agnes, "he hath laid up great treasures; and he addeth unto them daily. But what be they? The benisons of widows, and the thanksgivings of orphans, and the joy of the oppressed, and the smiles of galley-slaves; them he comforteth, and nurtureth, and freeth, and redeemeth continually. And where layeth he them up? Where moth consumeth not, and thief corrupteth not, and where his heart is, in heaven. Dost thou envy him that treasure? His enemies

well speak of his riches; for who is there among them that hath amassed the like?"

"But thy brother," persisted Sir Ranulph, "giveth me a far different account of him; and of a verity he ought to know the truth herein."

"Receive him as a brother, not as a guide," said Agnes. "This I have told thee before. Nothing of the Archbishop Becket have I spoken, but what I do from my heart know to be true; judge then, therefore, how the case standeth."

"On my word thou speakest well, Agnes," said the knight. "As I am belted knight, I will restore those lands free and at once. Before I sleep I will give orders in this matter."

"Now our Lady be praised!" returned Agnes. "Thou hast by these few words, my Ranulph, removed much grief from my mind."

"Here cometh thy brother," remarked Sir Ranulph; "and, as it seemeth to me, in some haste."

"Well be met, fair sister!" cried Sir William de Tracy. "I would not for much wealth have broken in on your leisure, were it not that I have tidings of much import to you, Sir Ranulph; and I fear me their tenour will be displeasing unto both of you."

"What be they, Sir William?" asked the knight. "God send they concern not to-morrow!"

"That as may be," replied the other. "But the news reacheth thus far. For those said lands which you refused to surrender up (and that on just

grounds in my poor opinion) to the church of Canterbury, Odo of S. Augustine, and another monk, acting in the name and on the behalf of the Archbishop, have this morning, amongst divers others, excommunicated you also."

Sir Ranulph de Broc stood as one thunderstruck. Agnes turned very pale, but left go of the arm she had hitherto held. That motion roused the knight.

"Agnes," he said, "wilt thou fly from me as a polluted man? Wilt thou join thyself with this arrogant man against him that is thy betrothed husband? Nay, Agnes," he continued, striving again to take her hand, "he severeth not so; it needeth stronger steel than such to cut asunder such cords of love as ours. Or is it," he said bitterly, "that thou too art like the rest of woman-kind, false and heartless, and glad of an occasion like this to withdraw from me the heart and troth thou didst once plight me? If so it be, tell me so fairly; and choose not such false and shuffling means of breaking a heart that hath ever been wholly thine."

"Ranulph," said Agnes, bursting into tears, "I know not whether I should more weep for thee or for myself. For thee, that thou canst so requite her that hath loved thee so tenderly; or for me, that I should stand betrothed to one that is under the ban of the Church!"

"Forgive me, fair Agnes," returned the knight; "I scarce know what to say or to do. To have the

cup of bliss dashed from my lips, and when I thought to have instantly quaffed it, and by a hand that I had just forgiven!"

"*Forgiven*, Sir Ranulph!" said Agnes; "and what hadst thou to forgive? Thou committest an injury, and talkest of forgiving the injured, and then again ragest at him because he defendeth himself. Thou knowest not what to do? I will tell thee then: take horse upon the instant, and ride to Canterbury, and give up those lands, and if a penance of more be laid on thee give more, and obtain absolution. Shame on thee, that so poor an argument as my love should weigh with thee, when higher respects touch thee not! But an it be so, that thou lovest me as thou sayest, do this with speed; for, as my word was never yet broken, see thee and speak to thee again I will not till thou hast made thy peace with Holy Church."

She turned towards the castle as she spoke; and such was the decision of her manner, that Sir Ranulph dared not follow her. From a storm of conflicting emotions, in which pride, and love, and rage, and awe, strove for the mastery, he was roused by the voice of Sir William de Tracy.

"Come, Sir Ranulph!" he said, "this child's game suiteth boys and girls indifferent well, but is much unmeet for men, and those men belted knights. What meaneth that which even now you spake concerning your forgiveness of Becket?"

"Sir William," said Ranulph, "in love thou

hast never been, or thou wouldst not so trifle with me now."

"In love!" said De Tracy; "aye, marry, and out of it, a thousand times; and therefore do I best know its treatment. But I pray thee to answer me: thou surely hast not thought of making peace with Becket?"

"Marry, and I had promised that I would do so with all convenient speed; but whether this his fury holdeth me not from that promise absolved, I know not yet."

"Aye, an thou hadst promised twenty thousand times!" cried Sir William. "How canst thou yield thyself thus tamely to be overridden by a peevish girl, who knoweth not wrong from right?"

"But thou knowest her not as I do," pursued Sir Ranulph, "or thou wouldst know that to persist as I now am, were to cut me off from all hope of calling her my wife."

"I know the wiles and deceits of women better than thou dost," replied his friend. "Take my word for it, she will send for thee ere long, and love thee all the more for thy spirit in refusing her."

"Nathless," returned Ranulph, "I am even now minded to follow that which she desireth, and make my submission with the best grace I can: the rather that something within my breast telleth me she adviseth right."

"Nay then, have thine own way!" said the other. "Ride in all haste to Canterbury: tarry all

night without the Abbey of S. Augustine; crouch to the ground before Odo's feet when he cometh forth on the morrow; give up those lands; and if he asketh for Saltwood, give up that fair manor too; kneel, and beg, and weep, and lament before him; and perchance, in due season, when thou art abased low enough to satiate his pride, he will condescend to shrive thee! After this thou mayest be my sister's husband, but never more be brother of mine!"

"What then, in S. George's name," asked Ranulph somewhat angrily, "wouldst thou have me to do?"

"This would I have thee to do," said De Tracy gravely, and quitting entirely his previously sarcastic tone. "Tarry a space till our lord cometh over from Normandy. Thither will I, to tell him of this new insolence of Becket's. He will not ever bear to be insulted and trampled on; good sparkles of his Plantagenet courage he hath already made manifest; and there needeth but this to blow it into a blaze. Rest assured he will not overlook the sufferings of his friends here, among whom thou holdest a chief place; but will revenge them with what speed he may."

"Of a surety," reasoned De Broc, "there were no harm in tarrying for a while. Peradventure, the censure may be taken off me without my yielding, if I have but the patience to wait for a time sufficient."

"And consider," pursued Sir William, "that thou wilt be betraying me, and thy other friends in France, if while we be pleading thy cause thou art deserting it. Ill will it stand with thine honour, if, when a mandate hath been wrested from the Archbishop for the removal of this censure, thou still retaining thine own, the messenger that beareth it hither shall find it no longer thine. Thus wouldst thou make thy friends fools, and thyself something worse."

"Of a surety I will take no further steps herein," said De Broc, "till I hear further from thee."

"As doubt not thou shalt, and that very presently," answered the other. "But where wilt thou the meanwhile bestow thyself?"

"An I hold this night for Saltwood," replied Ranulph; "wilt thou bear me company?"

"Marry, and very willingly," he answered. "Only I will first say a word to my sister; and will meet thee at the postern presently."

Thus they parted: Sir Ranulph to make preparations for his journey; and Sir William to acquaint his sister with her lover's determination of still defying the utmost censures of the Church.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE weary six years of the Archbishop's exile were now over. The sun rose in unclouded splendour on the Feast of S. Andrew; the wind set fair for England; and the waves, as the Archbishop and Warel looked at them from the window of the little convent in which they had passed the last night of their banishment, rippled gaily on the beach, as if promising a gentle escort across the channel. The bark was at anchor in the bay; and her mariners eagerly awaited their summons. The simple morning meal was over, when the Primate addressed Warel.

"Men think us happy this day, my son, in that we have made, by the blessing of God, all opposition bow before us, and are about, after all our wanderings, to return unto the land that we love. Well do we know, on the contrary part, what toils and tribulations await us there. Every day hear we



that our messengers be injured and insulted, our messages disobeyed, our censures slighted, and we ourselves set at nought and threatened. Nevertheless, having been so often delivered aforetime, we will not doubt that even in these perils we shall also be upheld."

"Nevertheless, holy Father, they be not of that nature that we can shut our eyes unto them ; and none can lay it unto your Holiness's charge that you have not taken all measures of forethought whereby they may be averted."

"True, my son : it were a tempting of God to pray unto Him for preservation without using the means necessary thereunto. It were like unto the captain who should put forth with a leak in his vessel, and then cry out and pray for preservation."

"I trust me," said Warel, "that He will so hear your Fatherliness's prayers, that, by the intercession of those glorious defenders of the same Church, S. Alphege and Blessed Anselm, the evil that we fear may be averted, and the good furthered and promoted."

"Amen !" replied Becket. "To which end, descend we to the chapel, where the brethren even now wait for us, to offer up our supplications as the Church hath in this case taught us."

The twelve brethren of the foundation and its Prior having taken their places with Warel, and the Archbishop seating himself by the Altar, *Benedictus*

was sung; and then, *Kyrie Eleison* and *Pater Noster* having been said, he continued—"Give, O LORD, Thy Salvation unto Thy servants." "Who do put," chanted the Choir, "their trust in Thee." "Send them help from the Sanctuary." "And strengthen them out of Sion." "Be unto them," prayed the Bishop, "a Tower of Strength." "From the face," replied the Brethren, "of their enemy." "Let the enemy," he proceeded, "have no advantage over them, nor the son of violence approach to hurt them." "Praised be the LORD daily." "Even the GOD That helpeth us," they responded, "and That poureth His benefits upon us." "Shew us Thy ways, O LORD!" "And teach us Thy paths!" "Oh, that our ways were made so direct." "That they might," replied the Chorus, "keep Thy commandments." "The crooked shall be made straight." "The rough places plain." "O LORD," concluded the Archbishop, "hear our prayer!" "And let our cry," answered the others, "come unto Thee!"

"The LORD be with you."

"*And with thy spirit.*"

"Let us pray. GOD, Which leddest Thy people Israel dryshod through the midst of the Red Sea, and by the guiding of a star didst conduct the wise men unto Bethlehem, grant us, we pray Thee, a prosperous journey and a quiet season; that, Thy holy Angel being our companion, we may attain unto that place whither we journey, and finally may

enter into the port of everlasting felicity, through Christ our LORD.

"O GOD, Who broughtest Thy servant Abraham from Ur of the Chaldeans, and didst protect him through all the way in which he went, and among all the people through whom he passed; be unto us, we pray Thee, in our preparation a Support, in our journey a Solace, in the heat a Shadow, in the storm a Covering, in weariness a Consolation, in rough places a Staff, in shipwreck a Port; that so we may by Thy guidance return in peace unto our own homes.

"Assist us mercifully, O LORD, in these our supplications and prayers, and dispose the way of Thy servants towards the attainment of everlasting salvation; that among all the changes and chances of this mortal life, they may ever be defended by Thy most gracious and ready help.

"Grant to us, we pray Thee, Almighty God, that this Thy Family may walk in the way of Salvation, and following the example of blessed John, Thy forerunner, may finally attain to that place whereof he taught, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD, Who with Thee and the HOLY GHOST, liveth and reigneth, One God, world without end. Amen.

"Let us set forth," he continued, "in peace."

"In the name of the LORD," chanted the Choir.  
"Amen."

In half-an-hour, the vessel that bore the Arch-

bishop to his home, was bounding towards England. Let us leave her to pursue her easy voyage, and to land him on the following day at Sandwich; while we remain in France, to trace the schemes of his enemies.

Sir William de Tracy had used all his influence with the King to induce him, if possible, to compel Becket to free those from his anathema who persisted in their sacrilege. But Henry, though sorely chafed at this new proof of the Primate's firmness, was not willing to engage in a dispute where the right so evidently lay on his adversary's side; though at the same time he made no scruple of declaring that the firmness of those who retained the possessions of the church of Canterbury was by no means unpleasant to him. De Tracy, in writing to his friend Sir Ranulph de Broc, used every effort to excite him to perseverance: he represented that the Primate was odious to nearly all the Barons; that the two excommunicated Bishops had a strong party in their favour; that the high hand with which Church censures were carried would disgust many who had been previously partizans of Archbishop Becket; that the King's cause would finally prevail; and that a little firmness would enable him to retain that for which he had already suffered so much. It was not De Tracy's hatred to the Archbishop alone that induced him to bestow so much pains in keeping back these manors; he wished to support his own character, which was none of the best, by the

co-operation of one which stood so high as did that of Sir Ranulph de Broc ; and to do this, he wished to engage the latter in an implacable feud with the Archbishop. Agnes, meanwhile, had returned to the Nunnery of S. Mary, and there, in sorrow and trembling, awaited the issue ; fully determined that she would never give herself to Sir Ranulph, till he had made full and free reparation to the Church.

De Tracy, who had long borne the most mortal hatred to the Archbishop, from having been, some years previously to the commencement of our tale, excommunicated by him for some unjust dealing, and not restored till he had made due amends, had determined, from the time of the Primate's disgrace, to take on him the fullest and most ample revenge. After sounding several of those who were most rancorous against him, he at length darkly hinted to Sir Reginald Fitz-Urse, a man almost as abandoned as himself, only as much his superior in brute courage as his inferior in cunning, that the death of the Primate would be the only means by which the difficult and tedious dispute would be settled. He further asserted, that though the King could not but express his horror of the deed before it were committed, nothing could in fact be more grateful to him when once performed ; and to prove this, he strung together the many expressions of anger into which at various times he had burst, when mentioning the Archbishop's name. Fitz-Urse, as soon as there was any prospect of reward, willingly lent himself to

the scheme; and having mentioned Sir Richard de Brito as one likely to join in it, he was accordingly admitted into the plot; and the co-operation of Sir Hugh de Morville, to a certain extent (how far, the course of our tale will shew), was secured. The names of the conspirators are curiously introduced in an *allegorical, moral, and historical* poem, composed by a contemporary author on the Death of the Martyr:

Tres sunt: Mortis villicus, Thrax, et Urso natus;  
 Ut sit tetras, tribus est Brito sociatus:  
 Paria rebus nomina facit hic reatus;  
 Truces et mortiferos, brutos, urai status.

It was agreed between the three principal workers of this deed of darkness, that the first violent action on the part of their great enemy, or the first expression of anger from the King which could by any possibility be construed to an approval of their design, should be his death-warrant.

So stood matters for the present. In the meanwhile the Primate had arrived in England, and had landed in the very port of Sandwich, whence, six years and three weeks before, he had sailed to his exile. On his first landing he was exposed to much danger from the shouts and threats of the rabble, who demanded with loud cries the restoration of the excommunicated Bishops; and he was indebted to the friendly interference of his old enemy, John of Oxford, for his escape. That same night he reached Canterbury. The monks of S. Augustine's,

with Abbat Odo at their head, went forth chanting the *Confitemini Domino*, the cxviiiith Psalm, telling how it is better to trust in the LORD than to put any confidence in man ; better to trust in the LORD than to put any confidence in princes ; how the Right Hand of the LORD doeth valiantly, the Right Hand of the LORD bringeth mighty things to pass ; how the stone which the builders refused was become the Headstone of the corner ; how it was the LORD's doing, and marvellous in their eyes. "Help," they continued, "O LORD ! O LORD, send us now prosperity ! Blessed be he that cometh in the Name of the LORD : we have wished you good luck, ye that are of the House of LORD !" And Canterbury poured out her citizens by thousands, to welcome in her Prelate. Mayor and aldermen in their robes of office, yeomen and merchants, mechanics and handicraftsmen, free and bond, serf and noble, Saxon and Norman, vied to do homage to the constancy and the victory of the returning Confessor. Fair faces and bright eyes lined the narrow windows ; the bells from S. Mary in the Castle, and S. George the Martyr, and S. Dunstan, and S. Alphege, pealed continuously ; above the rest, S. Ethelbert's Tower and S. Augustine's Cathedral thundered their welcome ; rushes, and such winter flowers as the season afforded, willingly offered from the land of the knight and the garden of the peasant, strewed the way. Thus, with triumph and rejoicings, went Thomas of Canterbury on the way that he was never to return.

It was remarked by his near friends, more especially by Warel, that though an occasional flush passed over it, the Primate's face was unusually pale; and though he courteously acknowledged the salutations of the people, he did it with a grave sadness of manner very unlike his usual life and energy. They who had remained in England thought and said it, how much his exile had changed him: the friends who had suffered with him knew that some deeper cause was at work.

That night, in his private chapel, the Primate ordered that the penitential Psalms should be chanted; and its roof echoed with the *O Luce Qui mutatus*; which we will thus venture to translate:

FATHER of Glory, That dost dwell  
In splendour inaccessible;  
Upon the Brightness of Whose Rays  
The veiled Seraph fears to gaze:

Thick is the mist, the night is drear  
That shrouds us as we sojourn here:  
But soon a light, that fadeth never,  
Shall chase away our shade for ever.

That Light, whose radiance passeth far  
The glory of the noontide star,  
That Light hath God laid up for them  
That wear His Royal Diadem.

It lingereth yet! Why thus delay  
Thy wish'd-for hours, celestial day?  
Ere we can reach that Heavenly Hall  
Our earthly tenement must fall.



But when, O GOD, the spirit, free  
From these its chains, shall haste to Thee,  
Then shall it see Thee, then adore,  
Then shall it love Thee evermore.

Grant that our life's fast fading ray  
May usher in eternal day,  
That we may find a Home with Thee,  
O undivided TRINITY !

## CHAPTER V.

BUSINESS of all kind poured in on the Archbishop at his return, and for some days almost overwhelmed him. Applications from the excommunicated Prelates were received by him, and answered courteously, but with firmness; that until they had made due reparation for their factious and insolent opposition to their ecclesiastical superior, he would not grant them absolution. Such as restored the confiscated lands were absolved instantly; the loss of their ill-acquired property serving as their penance. Among these Sir Ranulph de Broc was *not*. The nights of these days were in great measure spent by the Primate in writing to Pope Alexander, detailing the course of events, anticipating his approaching sufferings, and begging his prayers. Perhaps it was the same spirit of presentiment that had influenced a decision he had lately given on a case brought before him in Normandy. He happened to be passing a village in

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that province, where the church was being rebuilt; and considerable dissension prevailed amongst its inhabitants as to the Saint in whose honour it should be dedicated. The Prelate's advice was requested: "Let it be to him," said he, "who shall be the first Martyr for the Church." And accordingly it is now named after S. Thomas of Canterbury.

Matters being in some degree set in order, the Archbishop proceeded to his palace in Southwark, intending thence to wait on the young King at Woodstock. At London Bridge he was met in the same manner as he had been at Canterbury; vast crowds going forth to welcome that city's most illustrious native; the regular Clergy from Westminster, from S. Bartholomew's, and from the hundred monasteries of the city, Knights of S. John and Knights Templars, all vied to do him honour: the secular Clergy, angry at their Bishop's excommunication, were less eager to pay him respect. His stay was cut short by a message from the young King, commanding his instant return to Canterbury; with which injunction he complied, acting on his maxim of rendering to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, while to do so did not interfere with rendering his own to God.

In the mean time the Bishops of London and Salisbury, and the Archbishop of York, had arrived in France. The King was then at Caen; and thither they betook themselves. It was a frosty December night that, riding past the two severely

simple, yet lovely, spires of the Abbaye aux Hommes built by William the Conqueror, and passing slowly along the ill-paved and narrow Rue de S. Pierre, they toiled up the castle hill, and having bestowed themselves, as they agreed, in its lodge, thence sent a message to the King, who was at the instant holding high revelry in the great hall, requesting his permission to wait on him instantly.

"Bishops from England!" said the King: "and at this hour of the night! and such a night too! What may this mean," he continued, addressing Leicester, "my lord Earl? Surely nothing more of the storms which he of Canterbury hath stirred up?"

"Not unlikely were it, my royal Lord, in my poor opinion," replied the Earl. "But very grievous wrong must they have suffered of him, or of others, ere they could come hither at such unseemly time, like fugitives and vagabonds."

"We shall shortly know," replied the King, "the full truth: for here come the holy Fathers, and by my royal word, something the worse for their speed. Welcome, my good lords! what errand soever bringeth you here; of which we will desire your Holinesses, at fitting opportunity, to tell us."

The revellers, many of whom had not heard the previous message, started from their seats with astonishment, as the toil-worn and weather-stained Prelates entered the hall. To their eyes the scene was gloriously bright. Two richly chased silver

chandeliers, fed with the purest and sweetest oils, hung over the raised dais; on the further side, in the middle of the long table, sat the King, between the Earls of Arundel and Leicester; Knights and Barons filled up the length of the banquet: there was the glittering of jewels, the sparkling of wines, the harmony of wind instruments, the perfume of curious odours, the splendour of gold and silver goblets: the rich light fell on tapestry of a deep blue ground, covered with stars of gold, and the servitors were hastening to and fro from the oriel with dishes of precious metal. But the laugh was hushed, and the clamour sunk, and a breathless silence came over the scene, as Roger of York, kneeling on the first raised step, and imitated in that gesture by his brethren, called out,

“We crave justice, most gracious King, against Thomas of Canterbury. He filleth England with confusion from one end to another. Us he hath excommunicated; he runneth through Kent with an armed band; and not Canterbury alone, but London also, hath been thrown into an insurrection by his presence.”

“Now, by S. Denis,” cried the King, in an ungovernable fit of rage, “shall this fellow, who came to our court at the first on a lame wall-eyed horse, trample on his King and on the whole kingdom in this sort? Will none of the lazy knights whom I feed rid me of this turbulent Priest?”

Scarcely had he spoken, when Sir William de

Tracy, who sat next to Fitz-Urse, with one look at his friend, rose, and was immediately followed by him. When they reached the passage, and the bustle of the hall died away,

"Now," said he, "Fitz-Urse, here is our time. Hearest thou not what the King hath said—Who will rid me of this turbulent Priest? Call the others out, while I see to our horses: for no time must we lose, lest we be prevented of going at all."

"Well said, De Tracy!" cried Fitz-Urse; "have with you! I will speed me back again as quickly as I may, and summon De Morville and Brito. Where meet you then?"

"At S. Giles' postern," replied the other; "there will I be." And so they parted.

In a quarter of an hour the four knights were in the saddle. "Now," cried Sir William de Tracy, "dally we not with time. Place here is there none for counsel; but we all know that hostelrie, Le Soleil d'Or, where last S. Andrew's day the hart of ten was killed. Meet we there some half-hour hence, and by different routes."

So saying, he dashed down the castle hill; and many were the honest burgesses, in different streets of Caen, who were wakened from their first sleep by the clattering of a horseman over the uneven pavement; and who, after crossing himself, and imploring our Lady's protection, fell off again to his slumbers.

In the mean time, the King's passion having somewhat subsided, and the Prelates having with-

drawn, previously to joining the banquet, conversation, for a while interrupted, was again resumed, and turned chiefly on the intolerable audacity of the firm pontiff.

"Hath your Royal Highness," said the Earl of Leicester, "noted that we be four less in the company than we were when the holy Fathers arrived here?"

"So there be, on my honour," replied Henry, looking round the room, and marking the four empty seats. "Who be they that be gone?"

"An I mistake not," answered Leicester, "De Tracy and De Morville be two; the third is Sir Reginald Fitz-Urse; and the fourth Richard Brito."

"Wherefore departed they, sans leave taken? What sayest thou?" enquired the King somewhat angrily.

"Have I your royal licence to speak my thoughts?" asked Leicester.

"Of a surety," said the King. "Speak boldly, lord Earl, and quickly."

"Fast enemies be they all to Becket, my liege; and they did all leave the hall together, an I err not, and just as your Highness did say, Is there none who will rid me of the turbulent Priest?—Your royal wisdom will guess my fear."

"Now God forefend! my lord," said Henry, turning very pale. "Our Lady forgive me! I did speak in rage; but I would not for half my kingdom that a hair of his head were touched. Noted any here"—and he raised his voice as he spoke

—"noted any here, when the four knights whom we miss did leave the presence?"

None could remember when or how they went; but all agreed that they had not been seen since the ill-fated speech of the King.

"Who will take horse," cried the King in great agitation, "and bring them back? If only it be possible."

"I will, my liege," answered Leicester, rising. "An I outride them not, it shall not be for sparing the spur. Who goeth with me?"

"I will," said young Sir Aymer de Boishardin, rising also; "an I have his Highness' licence."

"And our thanks too, Sir Aymer," said the King, "and to you, my good lord. But we pray you let us hear of your success before we sleep."

"If possibly we may, your Highness shall do so," replied Leicester. "And now, Sir Aymer, to horse!"

While the revellers drank success to the adventurous knights, Leicester was enquiring from seneschal, esquire, and porter, of those who had thrown the banquet-hall into such confusion. Not being able to obtain any satisfactory information, he decided, after a brief consultation with his companion, on striking out on the Havre road; nothing doubting that England was the object of those whom he was pursuing.

What Norman traveller is there who knows not the village of Goustranville, with its long and



tedious ascent, crowned by its fair Early French church, long narrow lancets in the steep-roofed chancel, and taper spire? At the west end of the churchyard the houses fall back, and leave a kind of village square open to, but not in the road. Here, at the time of which I write, stood with its projecting bush, the Soleil d'Or; and here, as the angelus of peace tolled out from the tower, the men of blood reined up their horses.

"Now, be we all good and staunch men?" asked De Tracy. "He that will not venture all on this cast, let him return like a coward, and if he will, betray us."

"I will follow you, De Tracy, to the death!" cried Fitz-Urse.

"So will I," said Brito. "Beyond it, thou must hold me excused."

"So will I," said De Morville, but more hesitatingly; "provided always that no violence be done to the old man if he submitteth unto our demands peaceably."

"Who talketh of violence in that case?" said De Tracy. "Marry, we will use all diligence in treating him with gentleness; therefore go we forth," he added with a half laugh.

"But now, Sir Knights," cried Brito, "meseemeth it not expedient that we all journey together, lest our purposes be discovered. Where meet we in England?"

"At Saltwood Castle," said De Tracy; "there

is a right convenient place. But this remember, that if ye shall arrive, one or all, before me, Sir Ranulph De Broc may no further be trusted than I shall lead the way. And how far that may be I know not till I be come thither."

"Then," said Fitz-Urse, "we were best to feign ourselves bound on an especial message from the King to London, and that we at that castle have appointed to tarry for each other."

"If he asketh why we came not all together?" asked Morville.

"Answer, that the King's business so requireth," said De Tracy.

"Hark!" said Brito, "hear you nothing on the wind?"

"No," said all, after a pause of listening.

"Listen again!" cried Brito.

"By our Lady! there be horses," exclaimed De Tracy. "We be pursued. Quick! and draw the horses together into the field, and behind yon hedge. Let them pass us."

They all crouched down in the spot indicated in silence, and in a few minutes the sound of two horses, galloping hard from Caen came sharply along the frosty road. Another minute, and they were reined up in the before-mentioned square. Clouds of steam rose round them in the cold air; and the Knights knew Leicester's voice.

"Enquire," he said, "De Boishardin, of the

man that ringeth curfew, if he have heard horses pass this way. I will hold thy horse."

The young Knight hastened into the belfry, and made the inquiry. "He saith, lord Earl," said he, returning, "that such he heard some few minutes ago, and he believeth they be gone forwards towards Havre."

"On then!" cried the Earl. The Knight vaulted into his saddle, and the panting horses sped forward.

"By our Lady!" cried De Tracy, "a perilous adventure! Part we must, and that with all speed."

"So be it!" said Fitz-Urse. "We meet at Saltwood."

"Agreed!" cried all, as by different lanes they struck out of the main road from Caen to Havre.

## CHAPTER VI.

ARCHBISHOP BECKET, on his return to Canterbury, was received with almost equal expressions of joy with those which had accompanied his first entry. He was now universally acknowledged as the great defender of the Church; and the only fear entertained by his admirers and friends was, lest any thing in his future career should tarnish the lustre of his past sufferings. Reports were spread, that finding so much opposition and hatred among the Barons, and having met with so decided a check from the young King, his spirits failed him, and he had some idea of compromising his differences. Some such rumour probably caused Peter Cellensis, in a letter to John of Salisbury, to write thus:—

“ Ye who are the hands and the eyes of the Archbishop, by your holy exultations and prayers, lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble

knees. No wonder if his tribulations and sorrows cause him to be afflicted in spirit. But if he resteth and trusteth wholly in Him who causeth His elect to take firm root in the Rock, he shall bear in safety every whirlwind and tempest. Of a surety the ancient Fathers did sometimes faint in their tribulations; yet their charity increased in their languishing, and their fortitude had furtherance from their infirmity. Which, lest it should appear incredible to us, saith the Apostle, 'when I am weak, then am I strong.' And he sheweth wherein, adding, that our 'strength is made perfect in weakness.' Ye are to remember, that albeit 'the waves of the sea are mighty and rage horribly, the LORD That dwelleth on high is mightier; Who turneth the storm into a calm, and the anger of the king into gracious favour.'"

But, well meant as were these exhortations, the holy Prelate needed them not: natural as were the fears of his friends, the glory to which he had attained was, in a few days, as to be tenfold increased, so to be rendered secure and everlasting. Every thing else he had given up for the Church: it was to be seen whether, like a valiant pastor, he could die for his flock.

That was a melancholy Christmas-day for the Archbishop's followers. High Mass ended, the Primate ascended the pulpit; and having spoken of the love that day displayed towards mankind, and shewn how, if God so loved us, we ought also to

love one another, he proceeded to dwell on the guilt of those who offended against that love, by violating the Unity of the Church. And he concluded by again excommunicating those who had been most forward in those evil deeds: "Let them," said he, "be accursed from JESUS CHRIST, and cut off from the communion of the Saints!" The anger and darkly expressed purposes of revenge with which these denunciations were heard, excited the greatest anxiety in the minds of his followers for the event: but the three succeeding festivals passed over, and High Mass was said, on each, by the Primate, the crowd remaining as reverent and orderly as usual.

The afternoon of the last of these Feasts, that of the Holy Innocents, set in tempestuously; the sky was enveloped in one dark shroud of vapour; the branches, stripped and desolate, which overhung the steep lane leading up to Saltwood Castle, were dashed by the north wind against each other; and as night came on, the gale sighed more mournfully among the thickets and withered grass which skirted it. Up this lane a knight might have been seen urging his weary horse, against the sleet and snow which began to drive furiously; and ever and anon casting an eager glance towards the light, with its red and flickering glow, which danced from the windows of the great hall. Suddenly he appeared to behold before him, through the winter-twilight, some object which made him excite his horse to still

greater speed; and in a moment he reined him in by the side of another armed and mounted knight.

"Save you, Sir Reginald Fitz-Urse!" he cried, "I think the fiends have raised this storm. Saw you ever the like of the season?"

"De Tracy!" said Fitz-Urse; "I was even now marvelling if I were last of the company; but, as it seemeth, thou at least art behind me."

"Be our friends before us?" enquired the other.

"Nay," answered Sir Reginald, "how should I tell? I have seen nought of them since we parted at Le Soleil d'Or. Hast thou?"

"Not I," returned De Tracy. "They fell not in with Leicester, however: for I hear that he returned to the court in marvellous great dudgeon, swearing that Satanus must have hid us from his eyes."

"God send they be not food for the fishes!" cried the other: "but a troubled passage had I over the water."

"And so," said his friend, "had I. But be of good hope; methinketh I hear horsemen behind."

"Pray heaven they be friends!" cried Fitz-Urse, as the strangers came nearer. "What, ho! who goeth there?"

"Fitz-Urse!" cried the voice (for it was too dark to see the person) of Brito. "Is that thou?"

"Aye, marry," replied he addressed; "and De Tracy too. De Morville, art thou there?"

"Yea," answered Sir Hugh; "and an eviller

night never beheld I. I marvel we be all come together. Brito and I have seen nought of each other till a few hours ago."

"And Fitz-Urse and I met even now," cried De Tracy. "Marry, this sleet is like a Sherwood flight of arrows."

"On, in the devil's name, Sir Knights!" cried Fitz-Urse angrily. "Let us not stand chattering here like pyes, when a good roaring fire of logs, and a good pasty of doe, washed down with a right fair cup of French wine, were more germane to the purpose."

A few minutes brought them to the porter's lodge. The old man, half terrified by the unusual sight of four Knights on reeking steeds, the steam from whom threw a halo round his torch, as soon as he learnt their names, enquired somewhat fearfully their business.

"To see thy lord," cried De Tracy. "Is he not within?"

"Within is he," said the old man, "but marvellous much distempered."

"Distempered!" said the knight. "Ill in body meanest thou? or what aileth him?"

"Nay, my lord," replied the porter, "in mind he aileth. Ever since he was first excommunicated, he hath been much altered; but since the Archbishop did, on Christmas-day last, himself again lay him under excommunication, he hath been as one, ever and anon, possessed of an evil spirit. Marvellous



much sorrow is there in the house, for we love him as his father, whom GOD assoilzie!" And the tears came into his eyes.

"Heard ye ever, Sir Knights, the like of this Becket?" asked De Tracy. "Go thy ways, sir porter: tell thy lord who is here, and, as I am knight, we shall be the best leeches he hath known of a long time."

"God send ye be," muttered the old man, as he walked off: "but there is little good in that De Tracy; ever since he perjured himself in the matter of Eadwith, he hath gone from bad to worse; and I fear me, my lord hath gotten all this sore trouble by consorting with him. I marvel how he and the sweet lady Agnes could have come of the same stock; they be more different than rose and nettle. Well! I will e'en do my business!" he added, as he gave notice that four Knights desired to speak with his lord.

Their weary horses disposed of, and themselves ushered into Sir Ranulph de Broc, his visitors almost started at the traces of mental suffering which were visible in his pale cheek and sunken eye.

"Our Lady be praised, De Tracy," said he, "that thou art come. Never have I known one moment's peace since I promised thee to retain those lands till thou shouldst return. Now be I quit of that promise; and to-morrow will I give them up."

"I had hoped," said Sir William, considerably disappointed at his friend's resolution, "that thou hadst more courage than to mind this bugbear that hangeth over thee. However, every man to his taste! We," he continued, with a glance at his companions, "be bound to London, on the King's business, and have made bold to bespeak us a night's lodging here."

"With all my heart," cried De Broc. "I have thereto given orders, and such poor fare as I can command, shall you taste with all convenient speed. As ye go forth for London to-morrow, I will ride with you as far as Canterbury: for thither am I bound to see Archbishop Becket touching this same business. Why, how now?" he added, after a pause; "methinketh my company seemeth less agreeable unto you:" for the disconcerted Knights looked on each other as not knowing exactly how to proceed.

"Why," said Fitz-Urse, "the truth is that I—or that we—arise—that is, we set forth—that is, we must be at Canterbury betimes, and——"

"Besides," said De Tracy, "Becket is at Dover. He tarrieth to-morrow at God's House: thither must thou, if thou seekest him."

"Gramercy!" cried Sir Ranulph: "a wearisome ride hast thou spared me. To Dover then will I with all convenient speed."

"Remember," said De Tracy, "I have done my part—I have warned thee against this mad concession: now take thine own way; I have done."

"On my honour," returned De Broc, "I believe thou meanest me well, and holdest me dear; but in this case must our paths be different. Nevertheless, I thank thee for the pains thou hast spent on my behalf."

The seneschal marshalling the way, the Knights now repaired to the great hall, where we shall leave them to do justice to the good cheer set before them. Turn we now to see how Thomas of Canterbury behaved himself on the last evening he was to spend on earth.

"Something warneth me," he said to Warel, as they sat alone in his private chamber late that night, engaged, by the soft light of one silver lamp, over documents of various kinds, "that my time draweth very near; therefore have I, as thou mayest partly have observed, given the more diligence to set right all such matters as were most in disorder. One thing only remaineth—that I do thee justice: for never had Bishop, I think, a more true and a more zealous servant than thou hast been. To-day have I also settled this; and therein, I think, have done my last earthly business. As I hear, the Priory of Chicksands is now deprived of its head; and thee have I recommended to it: I charge thee that thou be as diligent a servant of Holy Church there, as thou hast been in thy service with me."

"O holy Father," cried Warel, "I pray you not thus to speak! God will not suffer you to be taken off in the midst of your days; in a good old age He

will bring you down to the tombs of your predecessors in yon Cathedral. But surely not now ! The captain shall not die when the battle is won, nor the pilot be suddenly removed when the vessel reacheth port. It cannot be that we should now have to cry, My Father, my Father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof !”

“ Nevertheless, my son,” said the Primate, “ rest assured that so, and no otherwise, will it be. Art thou content, therefore, with the place to which I have preferred thee, or not ?”

“ In good sooth,” replied Warel, “ I know not how to thank your Fatherliness as I ought for so far agracing me. But I pray you, suffer me not to leave your Holiness ; let me still hold the station I have held, and more content shall I be than with any wealth or honour.”

“ So be it,” answered the Archbishop : “ attend us thou shalt while we live, if thou art content to take that office when we are gone.”

“ But,” said Warel, “ God hath hitherto preserved your Paternity through many fears and dangers ; and will He not be thy Shield and Buckler still ?”

“ Of a surety He will, my son. But remember how blessed Bernard of Clairvaux expoundeth that text, teaching that as the buckler is broad in its upper end, thereby protecting the heart and other vital members from harm, but slopeth off towards its inferior portion, thereby leaving the feet to the enemy ; so God promiseth to protect from all danger

the most noble part of man, which is his spirit :  
from earthly mishaps to preserve him, He promiseth  
not."

And the Archbishop's feelings that night might  
well be summed up in the Compline Hymn, *Adsis*,  
*Superne SPIRITUS* :

Come, O Thou Father of the poor,  
Blest PARACLETE, below ;  
And from the abundance of Thy store,  
Thy promised gift bestow.

Now that the day's created beam  
Hath faded into night,  
Still let Thy glories o'er us stream,  
O Uncreated Light !

Come to our spirits, Heavenly Guest,  
And bid their labours cease ;  
And in the sorrows of the breast  
Mingle Thy perfect Peace !

Give us, O Fount of Grace, to fight,  
Though foes stand thick around ;  
Fighting, to conquer in Thy Might,  
And conquering, to be crown'd !

Praise to the FATHER, as is meet,  
Praise to the Only SON ;  
Praise to the Holy PARACLETE,  
The Blessed THREE in ONE !

## CHAPTER VII.

It was about eleven o'clock on the following morning, that, as the Archbishop was sitting in conversation with some of his Clergy and certain of the monks of S. Augustine's, word was brought him that four Knights were anxious to speak with him. And on being ushered into his presence, the four conspirators, unarmed, but with looks of the deadliest hatred, took their seats without salutation or reverence.

"My son," said Thomas of Canterbury, after a pause, addressing himself to Sir William de Tracy, "if thou and thy friends, whom we know not by name, yet welcome them as becometh a Bishop, will so far honour our poor table as this day to dine with us, we shall hold ourselves much agraced by your company."

"Know us, or not know us, Sir Archbishop," said Fitz-Urse, "we know thee, and that for an old

and pestilent traitor ; a rebel unto the King, and a breaker of the laws, odious to God, and hateful to all good men : with whom we will neither eat nor drink ; nor yet would we speak, but that we have a message unto thee from the King, which we must perforce deliver."

"And which we advise thee with all humility," added Brito, "to receive : for thy intolerable pride, however much it might win on the rabble at Fretvile, weigheth nothing at all with us."

"Wherefore," said the former, "we do thee to wit that if thou wilt receive in good part our message, well ; if not, thou wilt make this world too hot for thee."

"In sooth, my Lord of Canterbury," observed De Tracy, "these Knights do, though in somewhat rough manner, speak the truth. Our message is briefly this: the King willeth that you retire whence you came, beyond the seas ; inasmuch as he can no longer govern in London, while so haughty a priest reigneth at Canterbury."

"He demandeth also, that you forthwith absolve the Bishops whom in your rage you excommunicated," said Fitz-Urse.

"And he commandeth your immediate answer by us," added Brito.

"Hear me ! my sons," said the Primate calmly, while some of the Clergy left the apartment, and the rest, excepting Warel, crowded together as if to protect each other : "Hear me ! by God's Grace,

none shall see me crossing the seas again ; none shall separate between me and my Church any more. If any seeketh me, here let him come to find me : for I shall not fly. The Bishops whom ye speak of, not by us were they excommunicated, but by the Roman See ; nor by us shall they be restored, save after due satisfaction given, which hath not as yet been done. Moreover, if any other do, after their example, presume to violate the law of God, or the Canons of Holy Church, we will execute the same punishment on them ; of which ye may rest well assured."

"You will do it then, Sir Archbishop," cried Fitz-Urse, "at your own peril : for deem not that the King will allow so great an insult to pass unrevenge. And for our own parts, we will be very willing executioners of whatever he shall order herein."

"I doubt not that ye will, my sons," returned the Prelate. "And know this, that more willing ye cannot be to inflict, than I to endure martyrdom. Seek to terrify others : in the name of the Lord I will meet you foot to foot."

The porter, who had been a witness of this scene, now went out to the priests and monks who were assembled in the hall.

"An ye come not back the faster," he said, "there will be blood shed in this quarrel. These Knights be prepared for any iniquity."

Some of them, ashamed of deserting their Primate



at his need, returned; and the Knights, partly overawed by their presence, partly for the greater convenience of consultation, retired.

"My sons," said the Primate gently, "did ye well to flee and to leave me in my need? I am ready to die for you; but ye, it seemeth, have not courage to look on my death."

"Holy Father," said the porter returning, "the Knights are putting on their armour: wilt thou not give order that the doors be made fast?"

"Wherefore should they?" asked the Archbishop. "Trust we in God, and not in man. Knights may defend themselves knightfully, with arms; a Bishop suffereth bishopfully, when he offereth no defence."

"I pray your Fatherliness," said Warel, kneeling, "give orders that the doors be closed! God forbid thou shouldst not act as a Christian Bishop; but what letteth to use such means of defence as be put into our hands?"

"Be it then as thou wilt, my son," answered Becket; and the doors were accordingly shut.

"By our Lady!" exclaimed De Tracy, "as having armed themselves the Knights returned to the palace, the knave Archbishop hath made fast his doors. What do we now?"

"Tarry awhile," cried Brito: "I know an entrance by a back way which will easily lead us to him; but methinketh it were better not to press in thither now, when there be a herd of monks around him. If we delay our going a little, we shall find

him more free of them ; and the easier execute our purpose with him."

"Sir William," said Sir Hugh de Morville, "to terrify the Archbishop I was willing enough ; but I pray you think what you go about now. He deserveth to die—but not at our hands : we shall not be his executioners, but his murderers. Pray you consider whether, instead of the King's thanks, we shall not have the hatred of all good men."

"Didst thou think, then," asked De Tracy, "that we came hither from Caen only to speak a few harsh words? Marry, an that were all, we might well have spared ourselves the trouble. If thou fearest to join us, leave us ; the more thanks shall we have."

"Aye, marry," cried Fitz-Urse, "we want no unwilling hands ; we can do our own business well enough."

"Something too public is this place," observed De Tracy ; "let us withdraw awhile to our hostelry ; and when they think us gone, and be dispersed, then, De Brito, will we follow thee."

"Be those men well placed about the avenues?" asked Fitz-Urse : "else some of the citizens, with whom this man is in great favour, may play the part of his protectors."

"I have seen to that," replied Brito. "Fear nothing from them. Only have patience, and our way will be easy."

The winter sun was sinking towards the horizon ; but the Primate's sun was never to set. The greater

part of the Clergy, conceiving the danger to be over, had retired. Warel, Hubert, and a few others were still with him. Suddenly, at a back gate, was heard the sound of blows and outcries; and the porter, entering with terror in his countenance, cried out—

“Fly, my good lord, fly! The traitors be here again; they be forcing a way through the postern, and may not be much longer kept out!” With great persuasion, and not without some force, the Archbishop allowed himself to be led from the palace; and entering by way of the Chapter-house, stood before the Altar of S. Dionysius the Bishop, in the north-western Transept. Vainly they urged him to allow the doors of the Cathedral to be fastened; he absolutely refused. “We must triumph,” he said, “by suffering, not by resisting; we came not hither to oppose, but to yield.” They stood a few moments in an agony of suspense; while the sweet strains of the Vesper Psalms, then chanted in the Choir, stole mellowly through aisle and chapel; and the dim rays of the sun gleamed fainter and fainter. “Canterbury,” said the Primate again, “hath among her Prelates blessed Elphegius, that true martyr; another, ere long, shall be added to her calendar.” Heavy steps were now heard along the Chapter passage; and the monks, terrified beyond measure, cried in vain on their Archbishop to fly; and finding him resolute, rushed, some into the Choir, and others to the great Western door. Voices

were now heard, shouting, "Where is the traitor? where is the Archbishop?"

"Here is the Archbishop," said he, stepping boldly forward with the Chalice, taken from the before-named Altar, in his hand, "but no traitor. Farewell, my son; I am ready to die for Him Who shed His blood for me."

"Absolve the Bishops," cried Fitz-Urse, "and not a hair of your head shall be touched."

"Never," returned the holy Martyr, "till satisfaction hath been made by them."

"Be that thy death-warrant then," cried De Tracy; and the Knights endeavoured to drag him to the door of the church. Finding their efforts useless, "Why not dispatch him here?" cried Fitz-Urse.

"Gladly will I die," answered the Primate, "for the peace of the Church; only I charge you, in God's name, touch none of the monks or servitors, for they have done you no harm."

The murderers paused one moment; and in that interval the sweet notes floated down from the Choir, "the Father of Mercies, and God of all consolation." They were the last the Martyr heard.

Five minutes afterwards the four Knights were spurring, followed by many of their retainers, towards Dover. A crowd of priests and Benedictines surrounded the mutilated remains of the Martyr; Warel, severely wounded, was borne towards S. Augustine's; the city was in an uproar; the Cathedral

was thronged with those who came to be certified of the sad truth, and those who remained to assist or to counsel. A litter having been hastily formed, the body of the martyred Prelate was borne into the church of S. Augustine's; and there it lay that night.

\* \* \* \*

"The pastor of our souls,"—thus wrote Peter Cellensis on that sad night,—*"is gone: and yet I cannot mourn; he hath departed, not perished; he is not dead, but sleepeth. The martyrdom by which the LORD hath glorified His servant, is the port of life; he hath entered into the delights of the Heavenly land; into the bosom of Abraham; into the abyss of eternal glory. He hath gone on a journey, having taken his treasure with him; and shall in due season return again. His soul, rich in good works, shall at the general resurrection return unto her ancient abode. When thus he had prepared himself for his heavenly journey, Death, who met him, suffered him not to pass without a tribute. He that had long desired to put off his humanity and to be with CHRIST, gladly paid it, even the tribute of a little dust and clay. Thence went a rumour abroad among the people, that an evil beast hath devoured Joseph. They beheld the lacerated garment, even his body that he had put off; and thence judged that he had perished. But Joseph yet liveth, and is ruler over the whole land of Egypt. His blessed soul, freed from her corruptible taber-*

nacle, hath taken her departure to her reward. Called he was of Him That said, "I go to prepare a place for you: I will come again, and receive you unto Myself." He being of short life, hath yet lived long. He is called to heaven, of whom the world was not worthy; his light is no longer concealed under a bushel. In the sight of the universe he seemed to die; but his life is hid with CHRIST in GOD. Death seemed to swallow him up; death itself is swallowed up in victory. The LORD hath granted him the request of his lips; he hath drunk, like his Master, of the brook in the way: therefore hath he lifted up his head. The LORD, Who brought from the dead that Great SHEPHERD of the Sheep, raise up one who, in the stead of him that is gone, may be over this great people!"

## CHAPTER VII.

SIR RANULPH DE BROC, at an early hour of the same day on which his guests left him, set forth for Dover. Arrived at the gate of God's House, all things seemed to him to retain their usual appearance: whereas he had expected that some bustle and preparations would be manifest, occasioned by their noble guest.

"Is the Lord Archbishop yet to be seen?" he enquired of the porter.

"For whom asketh your Lordship?" asked he in return.

"For Archbishop Becket," replied De Broc. "He tarrieth here; is it not so?"

"Never heard I word spoken of his coming here, Sir Knight," answered the porter. "But of a surety he tarrieth now, as ever, in his palace at Canterbury."

"Then have I been strangely deceived," replied

the other. "Of a surety I was told by one that should have known, that he had lodged here these days past. But an he be at Canterbury, thither must I."

"Thou wert better to refresh thyself here, an I might advise," said the porter; "an thou needest not rest, thy horse doth."

Sir Ranulph, under the consciousness of his censure, replied,

"My errand requireth speed: else had I gladly tarried; and gramercy for thy offer."

So having refreshed himself and his horse at an obscure hostelrie in the town, he rode slowly on to Canterbury; musing on the nature of the offer he had to make, and the probable nature of its acceptance. When some four miles from the city, he was astonished to meet, riding as if pursued by a deadly enemy, the four Knights whom he had entertained the preceding day. His astonishment was increased by the manner in which they met, or rather passed him; not a moment did they pause, nor a token of recognition did he obtain. And at a somewhat quicker pace he rode on; eager to obtain the clue to this difficulty.

On entering the city, he at once perceived that something extraordinary had occurred: men were standing in knots of two or three at the corners of the streets in anxious converse; priests were streaming to the Cathedral; burgesses hurrying to the



town-hall ; women collected at the doors of the houses ; and even children standing aghast, as if terrified at some news, which they could not above half comprehend. At last, riding up to one party, he said,

" I pray you, my masters, what meaneth all this tumult ? Is there any ill news received from any place ?"

" The Archbishop is slain," they all answered with one voice.

" Slain !" repeated Sir Ranulph. " When, I pray you, and how ?"

" Even now," they answered, " by four Knights ; but their names I know not."

" Rode they forth this way ?" he enquired, anxiously.

" Even so," was the reply, " some hour ago."

The treachery and bloodthirstiness of his friends working on his mind, the possibility of his having prevented the catastrophe, the shelter he had given to those who meditated it, the sudden and violent death of the Prelate whom he had injured,—all these considerations seemed to take away his breath ; and he sat as one in a stupor. At length, having enquired for Abbat Odo, and having been informed that he was supposed to be at S. Augustine's, he proceeded thither ; and with great difficulty having made his way through the crowds that beset the doors into the church, he found it full of

ecclesiasticks of every description. Some were discussing in the nave the great event,—the bravery of Warel, the cowardliness of the other Monks who stood near the Primate, the audacity of the Knights, the probability of the guilt or innocence of the King; nay, even the choice of a successor was already canvassed. Passing by these, and in the confusion that prevailed making his way into the choir, he saw Abbat Odo standing near the High Altar, and at the head of the bier, whereon the body of the Martyr was laid. A linen cloth had been spread over it, and the rich Archiepiscopal robes in which the Prelate had fallen, were nearly but not quite concealed by it. Not a word was spoken by any of the bystanders: they gazed on the lifeless form before them, and seemed occupied in unspoken prayer. Bursting through them, and throwing himself at the feet of Odo, the Knight bursting into a passionate fit of tears, confessed the whole of his past conduct, and earnestly begged for absolution.

“O blessed saint!” said the Abbat, “of a verity thou hast triumphed! Of a truth, now, as ever, the blood of the Martyrs is the seed of the Church!” And then, in the midst of that assembly, and in the presence, as it were, of the Prelate who had inflicted it, Ranulph de Broc was absolved from the Church’s censure.

Agnes de Tracy had heard the fatal news: she

knew that her brother was among the murderers : she knew that her affianced husband had given them shelter on the preceding night, and that when he had imagined himself injured by the martyred Archbishop ; and it seemed as if the measure of her grief was full. How she heard the news of Sir Ranulph's innocence and absolution ; how she received him when in her presence he pleaded his own justification ; the eloquence of his words, and the tenour of her answers,—all this must be left to the reader's fancy. We only know that on a high-tomb of Early English workmanship, on the south side of the chancel of Saltwood church, might once be seen the recumbent effigies of a knight and his lady. His feet rested on a lion, her's on a hound ; the hands of the lady were clasped, those of the knight contained a church, thereby showing him to be the founder of one. She was vested in the mantilla and embroidered petticoat ; he had the coif-de-mailles on his head, chasseurs of mail and genouilleres of plate ; his legs crossed ; and he had a simple prick spur. And the legend was,

Sire : Ranulph : de : Broc : et : Agnes : sa : feme :

gisont : icy :

Dieu : de : ler : almes : ept : mercy : amen.

Of Warel, we can only tell the reader, that if he will visit the church of Keysoe, in Bedfordshire, around the base of the font, which is of early

English date, he will find the following inscription :—

✠ Crestui : vous : ki : par : hici : passerui :  
 Pour : l'ame : de : Warel : prieui :  
 Ke : Dieu : par : sa : grace :  
 Verrai : merci : li : asse.

Which might thus run in modern French :

Restez, vous qui par ici passerez,  
 Pour l'âme de Warel priez :  
 Que Dieu par sa grâce  
 Voudrait merci lui faire.

It falls not within the limits of our design to relate how the death of S. Thomas, by procuring the abrogation of the Constitutions of Clarendon, gave that liberty to the Church which was the aim of his life. And sooner than in most other cases was his holy constancy and courage acknowledged by men; princes knelt at his shrine; his enemies extolled his virtues: the Church soon asked his intercession in her prayers; pilgrims from all lands flocked to his tomb; and the 7th of July, 1220, saw his remains removed from the undercroft to the magnificent shrine prepared for them in BECKET'S CROWN; which day thenceforth superseded in great measure that of his martyrdom, the Feast of his Translation falling at so much more favourable a season. As might have been expected, Henry the Eighth erased his name from the kalendar, and sentenced his remains to the wind; by

an express decree pronouncing that his life was madness, and his end without honour. Will not the true churchman reply—But he is in peace! How is he numbered with the children of God, and his lot is among the saints!

THE END.

